

**Dan:** Welcome! We are picking up today where we left off last week. We are in the middle of a two-part message from Ephesians 5. Throughout this entire book we've been talking at the theme, "God's Love Changes Everything" and today we continue to unpack how God's love changes our marriage. And just like last week, I have my wonderful wife Keren with me. As we said last week, when we talk about marriage, there is just so much that we can glean not simply hearing from a man, but hearing from a husband and wife together. Keren, last week you told everyone how on the first night that we met, we were sharing a meal together with your family and you played footsie with me under the table. Why don't you tell another story about the early days of our relationship?

**Keren:** OK, so fast forward six years from the foot rubbing incident, and Dan and I are engaged. We're doing pre-marriage counseling with a very seasoned, godly couple - the couple that actually oversaw all the pre-marriage counseling at the church where Dan worked, the church had like 15,000 people. So I'm thinking they are going to give us some amazing counsel. After some get-to-know-you sessions, they hand us these beautiful books the church has put together, filled with all the advice we will need to make our marriage work. We start going through it, and I lean over to Dan and say, "This stuff is really great. This content is incredible." Dan smiles his biggest smile, leans in and whispers... "I wrote this book." He legitimately had written the pre-marriage material for his church three years before we got married.

**Dan:** It was definitely one of my prouder moments. But it ended up working against me because when I tried to quote from that book that I had written, Keren said it was a little self-serving. Fair enough. One of the key ideas we talked about last week was the conviction that we don't simply want to do marriage in a way that works for us, and we don't want to do marriage the way that our culture has programmed us to do it. We want to do marriage God's way. Marriage was his idea. So even if it's challenging, even if it's counter intuitive, even if it requires us to make some big changes, we want to do marriage God's way. Because the end goal isn't simply having a marriage that is easy or fun or enjoyable. The end goal is to glorify God. The end goal is that through our marriage, we could come to know Jesus better, to look more like him, for our spouse to look more like him, and to reflect the gospel to the world. The end goal is not our happiness but our holiness. Last week we pressed into Paul's message to wives, We talked about submission and respect. Today we will look at what God says to husbands. But before we dive in, Keren, why don't you take a moment and share about some of the feedback we've heard since last week.

**Keren:** We've been really blown away by the response. Overwhelmingly, both wives and husbands have shared that they felt the presence of God here and that the Holy Spirit put his finger on very specific things in their lives. Several women reached out to say God moved them to apologize to their husbands for not being respectful, for being unkind. Multiple women said the Holy Spirit convicted them to confess hidden sins to their husbands. I think we were most surprised by the amount of single people who reached out to say that God used the message to get a hold of their attention as well - across the board, just beautiful responses to God's word.

Dan: It was so encouraging. And we are hoping for a similar type of response today. Let's dive into the Scriptures. **25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself.** When you compare the teaching that Paul gives to husbands with what he said to the wives, there are a lot of differences! The most obvious of which is the length. If you just count up the words, as we talked about last week, in the Greek, Paul gives 47 words to wives, and 147 to husbands. More than three times as much! And that's not because men are hard of hearing, though sometimes it can take us a while to get the point. The reason God gives husbands so much more airtime is because God places the responsibility for the leadership of the marriage with the husband. As the leader, there is an enormous weight and responsibility that comes with that role. *(And to be faithful to scripture, we've made this sermon three times as long! Just kidding.)*

Where wives are called to reflect the role of the church, husbands are called to reflect the role of Christ. And because of that, we are called to very different actions: Wives are given one set of instructions (submission and respect) and husbands are given a different set. And all of the instructions for husbands center around one key word: Love! 5:25 says, **“Husbands, love your wives!”** Everything else he says flows from and explains how to do that. And I think in the passage we see three different aspects of the type of love a husband should have for his wife.

First, there is **Sacrificial Love**. Paul says **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”** Paul recognizes that the husband is the head of his wife, but with Jesus as the example Paul asks if you know what it means to be the head, to be the leader? It means that like Jesus, you get the privilege of being a servant. What did Jesus do for his bride, the church? He washed her feet. He went to the cross. He gave up his life.

Husbands, God isn't just calling us to have warm, loving feeling in our hearts toward our wives. He's calling us to daily put their best interests above our own, regardless of personal cost. I think most of the men in the room, because we are naturally protectors, if a threat came to our wife, we would be willing to place ourselves between that threat and our wife (a speeding car, an intruder, etc.), even if that cost us our life. That's sacrificial love. But most of us are never going to be in that situation...so what matters is not whether we can heroically give our life for her in one act of bravery, but whether or not, day in and day out, we will lay down our preferences, lay down our rights, prefer our wife, and put her needs above our own. It's not putting a hundred-dollar bill down all at once. It's one penny, one nickel, one dime, day after day after day. A lifestyle of sacrificial love.

Keren, we have a lot of friends who talk to us about their marriages. And I think it's safe to say that sometimes the wives don't always feel like their husbands are pursuing them with sacrificial

love. From what you have seen, what are the most common things that can tend to take precedence over a husband sacrificially loving their wife?

**Keren:** More than anything else, most wives just want their husbands to be fully present. For some husbands, that means letting go of professional and financial opportunities in order to spend more time with your wife and family. There are some seasons when you have to work more, but for some men, it becomes a way of life because they believe the lie that the number one way to lead their family is through provision. But it's not. What your wife and your family need more than anything is your presence. It's not a bigger home, better vacations, more hobbies; it's your presence, your time, your love. Here's a good question to ask: What do you honestly believe would make your family stronger? A 10% raise at work, or 10% more of your time?

Some husbands are physically home but disengaged. They're disconnected. They're checked out. They are working from home; they're on their phones; they're watching TV. Humbly, I'd like to challenge every man in this room to honestly reflect - what does an extra 30 minutes on your phone bring about? Does it give you the rest you need after a long day or does it rob you of quality time with your wife and kids?

I'm going to take this opportunity to brag on Dan for a moment. Every time this man walks in the door, he runs to find me, smothers me in kisses and hugs, tells me he adores me, and then he picks up our seven-month-old and plays with him which gives me a moment to re-charge before the evening. And then we decide our evening plans together. When Dan took on the senior role here, he promised to put me first, and he does.

**Dan**—Husbands, this is an area where we have to lead well. We have to show up consistently and we have to engage fully. I know this can be a hard conversation to initiate, but sometimes we have to ask our wives, I do this with Keren every month or two, "How can I love you better? "What sacrifices do you need me to make that will honor you and bless you?" And even if what she shares is challenging, listen well. Share what she tells you with your friends and ask for accountability and encouragement. If we want to lead like Jesus, we have to lead with sacrificial love. And, let me just say this: your wife deserves it. She's worthy of it. We have to decide to pay the price.

So Paul calls us to a sacrificial love; he also calls us to **Sanctifying love**. Take a look at what he says in the next few verses: **25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.** Look at all of those words. Holy, cleansing, washing, radiant, without stain or wrinkle, blameless.

Let me say this: I think this is going to be, by far and away, the most challenging thing for husbands to hear. I know that in my role as a husband, this is by far and away the hardest thing to do well. But if we are going to love our wife like Christ loves this church, this is so, so important. And we can't afford to pass over it. As Jesus loves the church, what does he do for us? He sees that we have imperfections. He sees that we are selfish and immature. We have idols and misaligned priorities, and as he loves us, he engages with us in such a way that those things are exposed, confronted, and he leads us to a place where we are radiant and pure, holy and

blameless. He sanctifies us. That's what Christ does for his bride. And that is what God is calling Christian husbands to do for their bride.

When a husband sees an area of imperfection in his wife, an area of immaturity, where she is not yet fully honoring God, it is the husband's God-ordained responsibility to have a sanctifying love for his wife. even if it's challenging. Even if he doesn't think the conversation is going to go smoothly, it is his responsibility to love his wife in such a way where those areas of immaturity, imperfection, and sometimes even sin can be recognized and, with God's help, be healed and restored. Let me just tell you, this is going to be hard. This is going to cause conflict. But remember, the end goal that the Scriptures have in mind isn't an easy, smooth, conflict-free marriage. The end result is the gospel being on display in your life. The end goal is you a husband leading like Jesus, and your wife becoming more and more like Jesus because of your role in her life.

I want to again recognize this is really, really hard. But if we are going to see this happen in our marriages, we have to get past two huge hurdles. One on the guy's part. One on the woman's part. For the men we have to get past passivity. And for the women, we have to get past pride. Passivity and pride have been plaguing us from the beginning. We see this all the way back in Genesis 3, when sin first entered the world. **1 The serpent said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.**

Now a lot is made about this passage about the woman being the one who was deceived and who brought sin into the world. She was the one who engaged in the discussion, the one who first ate the fruit...but did you see what it says in 3:6? Where was Adam when all of this was happening? **Who was with her!** Yes, Eve was deceived and led into sin, but her husband was there. The one who was supposed to protect her was there. The one who was supposed to be her spiritual leader was there. The one who was supposed to initiate toward her with sanctifying love was there. And he did nothing. He saw it. But he was silent. In passivity, he chose to abdicate his role as a leader, protector, and sanctifier, and in so doing, he became complicit in her sin, and then soon followed her in it.

That's what happened in the first marriage. And it happens in marriages today, too. As husbands, we are being called to develop spiritually, to overcome our insecurity and our proclivity toward passivity. We can't be driven by our desire to not rock the boat; we have to be driven by our desire to see our wives become more like Jesus and flourish in their faith through our leadership in their lives.

Now I hope this goes without saying, but when a husband initiates toward his wife with sanctifying love, in order to call her toward spiritual maturity, it has to be done with gentleness and grace. There can't be impure motives on the inside or any harshness or aggression on the

outside. Ephesians 4 calls us to “speak the truth in love.” Colossians 3:19 specifically says “Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.” So husbands, we are called to do this, but do this with grace and kindness.

**Keren:** This is such an important way for husbands to love their wives. It not only requires a lot from the husband, it requires a lot from the wife, too. Last week, I talked about how many women say that they would like their husbands to be spiritual leaders at home, but through marriage counseling, I have found that the same women who want their husbands to lead at home, won't let him lead unless he's leading their way. And we've trained our husbands that if they step up and try to lead us, we'll punish them. Sometimes, our feelings get hurt, so we punish them by crying. Sometimes, our ego gets hurt, so we punish them by lashing out or getting cold. I can't tell you how many counseling sessions I've been in where there is a sweet, kind, godly woman whose pride keeps the couple from moving forward.

As women, it's so hard to hear correction from our husbands, even when they are being gentle. During our first year of marriage, I was terrified of disappointing Dan, and he had to be extra careful when he shared any form of critique. I was a 10 on the sensitive scale. One day, he came home, and said, “Keren, this isn't a big deal, but I need to share something with you.” I remember backing up, and my eyes had already welled up with tears, and I said, “I can't take it. I'm not ready!” And he said, “It's not really a big deal, but I do need to bring it up.” And I'm getting hysterical at this point, “No, please. No, please!” And then I settle myself down and say, “OK, OK. I'm ready. Tell me.” And Dan says, “Well, I don't really like the organic apples you've been buying.”

And something about that moment reoriented me, and I repented for being so sensitive and I told Dan that I would work really hard to make it easier to bring things up. One of the books that Dan and I highly recommend for any married couple is *The Meaning of Marriage* by Tim and Kathy Keller. Listen to what they say about this idea of sanctification in marriage: **Within the Christian vision for marriage, here's what it means to love someone. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of the person God is creating, and to say, “I see (the person who God is shaping you to be), and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, ‘I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!’”** Each spouse should see the great thing that Jesus is doing in the life of their mate and then give himself or herself to be a vehicle for that work, and envision the day that you will stand together before God, seeing each other presented in spotless beauty and glory.

**Dan:** That is such a beautiful and compelling picture of what marriage can be like. So we see that the Christ-like love husbands are being called to is a sacrificial love, a sanctifying love, and finally, a **satisfying love**. Listen to what Paul says: **In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body.** Paul is saying that a man knows how to look after his own needs. When he's tired he sleeps. When he's hungry he eats. Whatever his body needs, he provides for it. And in this passage Paul says husbands ought to love their wives **as their own bodies**. Every man knows what it means to provide for

themselves, to take good care of themselves. What does that mean? Husbands are called to provide for their wives and take care of their wives.

One of my mentors used to tell me, “Your wife’s face is your canvas. You get to decide in 20 years what kind of wrinkles she has. Are they the wrinkles from smiling too much or from anguish and sadness?” As husbands we have to love our wives in a way that meets their deepest needs, in a way that makes them come alive and overflow with joy. I heard someone at a marriage conference talk about this one time. He was saying how every husband ought to know his wife’s favorite flower. This older gentleman leaned over and asked his wife, “Gold Medal All-Purpose, right?” That’s not what we’re talking about!

As a husband, it is our privilege to get to pursue our wife. Christ pursues his bride. We get to pursue our bride. Husbands, let me set a really high bar for all us here. If we are to pursue our wives with satisfying love, the way Christ pursues us, then our wives should be able to tell how much God loves them by how we treat them. Let me say that again: our wives should be able to tell how much God loves them by how we treat them. Husband, let me ask you, can your wife, today, say, “I know God loves me, cherishes me, delights in me, and is unconditionally committed to my good based upon the way my husband treats me? That’s the vision here. Keren, as you think about what it looks like for a husband to have a love that satisfies his wife, what do you think of. What comes to your mind?

**Keren:** I’m looking out into the crowd right now, and there are a lot of guys sitting next to women who are way more attractive than you! Sometimes I think, “How does that happen?” But we all know how it happens. You chased her down! You pursued and wooed her at great cost; you wouldn’t take no for an answer. Gifts, flowers, adventures, dancing, sweet notes and sweet words. Some of the stories are hilarious, of guys doing absurd and extravagant things to win the woman. Think back to the mindset you had when you were trying to win her over and make her yours. As women, we want to be pursued that way every day of our lives. Never stop the pursuit. Not necessarily extravagantly, but each husband can take time to do those sweet things that make the wife feel pursued and special, show us that we are at the forefront of your mind. Take the time to figure out what those things are for your wife and do them on a regular basis. And be creative; don’t get stuck in a rut. Show her that you are continuing to love her in each new season of life.

Dan: We need strong marriages in this church! We need our husbands and our wives to put Christ first, to do things God’s way, and to show the world who Christ is by the way we love each other.

Invite any men who want to be prayed over.