

How are we? Let's get to work. If you think about the words that the Scriptures use and the words that we use to describe what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, there's this really interesting pattern that develops. The Scriptures and we use the idea of reconciliation or that we are reconciled, and in it it's this idea that at one time we had relational purity with the Lord and now we don't, and now the cross of Christ has reconciled us to God. And if you look at the idea of redemption or being redeemed, it was that we've somehow been kidnapped and He's paid the ransom for us and has gotten us back into right standing. There's even the word "salvation" itself. In 1525 when William Tyndale produced the first Greek New Testament, the word "salvation" was actually translated to "health" or "a return to health." It was this idea that in Jesus Christ we were returning health, that we were sick and now we're not. So there's this idea in the Scriptures when it comes to what Jesus did for us on the cross, He is returning us to how He created the universe to be. We discussed that at length in earlier in this series, and I do not have time to recap that today. We just talked last week about the fact that there is no sacred/secular divide. That's now how God sees the universe. It's not that church is sacred and economics, education, agriculture and all of that is secular. That is an unbiblical way to see the world. God has put structures into place in all domains of society. So direction becomes when we line ourselves up with how He designed things to work.

Now, when sin entered into the world, it fractured everything, not just our relationship with the Lord, but with our relationship with one another. So here's what I want to do, and then I'll explain why in this series I want to do this. I want to talk this morning about the relationship between husbands and wives and how, in Jesus Christ, we get back to Genesis 2, which says of the man and woman, "They were naked and unashamed." And don't think "naked" in regards to physical nakedness (although that's great), but rather think in terms of them having nothing to hide. So how do we get a man and a woman in the confines of marriage back to the place where they have nothing to hide from one another and they don't walk or operate in any shame? So Jesus is going to purchase that for us in His cross, and then He's going to lead us that way by giving us commands that we are to obey and, in obedience to those commands, we line ourselves up with how He designed things to work for our joy and His glory. Now I don't know this year that I will get into a more controversial text than the one that I'm about to be in. It flies in the face of almost everything our culture believes and tries to operate in. So here's what I need you to promise me. I'm fine with you getting offended, and I'm fine with you getting angry. What I'm saying is don't turn me off until we're done unpacking it. Don't just hear certain words and go, "Oh no, he didn't!" Just give me my 45-50 minutes, let me unpack this thing and then if you want to leave and never come back, I really am okay with that. But don't turn me off until we're done here. Because God's appeal to you as wives and God's appeal to you as husbands is not about your begrudging submission, it's about your joy. So what's at stake here is your joy. So my prayer is that you would be hedonistic enough to listen and here.

What I'm going to do is read the text, and then we'll start to unpack it. You'll what I mean almost immediately. Let's go to 1 Peter 3, starting in verse 1. This text starts with, "Likewise, . . ." What's happened is he's just gone through what it looks like to submit to authorities in all these different domains. So it's "Here's what it looks like to submit to governmental authorities as believers. . . Here's what it looks like to submit to coworkers and bosses. . . Here's what it looks like submitting to authorities in church. . ." So he's walking through this idea that there are authorities. And now look at what he says, "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very

precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." So in this text, he's saying, "I've given you My grace, so as you stumble and try to figure this out, let me line you up with how I designed things to work. Wives, do this. Husbands, do this." This occurs in several other occasions in the Scriptures, namely Ephesians 5.

Let me get to the bottom of this. Because right now, our culture would say that there's no way a woman should be subject to a man. There is no submission. If anything, it's an equal partnership. So this idea of submission is wildly unpopular idea, but let me get to the bottom of it this way. The thrust of this text isn't submission or subjection at all. That's a secondary issue. It's an issue, but it's secondary. The primary issue in this text concerning the woman is simple. Here's what it is. The command of God to the woman is to not put her hope in anything other than Him. Intrinsic within this text is, "As the woman of God have done historically, put your hope in God." How you're defined, where your strength comes from, where your purpose comes from, you put your hope in God. And then there's an appeal in this text to make sure that you don't put it in one of two places that women have a tendency to put their hope. The first one is in external beauty. Did you hear it in the text? He's not saying don't braid your hair. This text isn't going, "Oh, you braid your hair? Hooker!" That's not happening in this text. You miss the point where you make this text read that way. That's not what happened. He said, "Don't put your hope in external beauty, and don't be defined by an external sensuality." It's an appeal to modesty, and it's an appeal to the development of the mind and the soul of a woman. That's the appeal.

And listen, this is a problem in Dallas. It is. I have lived in a lot of places, I travel all the time, and we are known for beautiful women. There aren't any mountains to climb, there isn't an ocean to play in, so we have made external beauty some sort of sport. Just do a simple Google search on how many gyms we have in Dallas/Ft. Worth compared to Chicago, Manhattan or other comparable cities. There are malls you can go to in this city where you will see the same woman over and over and over again, as if she was cloned. Am I a liar? There was \$12.4 billion spent on cosmetics alone last year, and that's not counting money spent on cosmetic surgery, just cosmetics. Do you think there's an immense amount of pressure on you to be pretty? Of course there is. Like we said last week, there's no sacred/secular divide. I'm not saying there's anything intrinsically wrong with nice clothes, looking nice or having a gym membership. It would be foolish to say that. What I'm saying is don't be defined by them and don't put your hope in them.

Listen to this. This is the woman that the Lord loves. Proverbs 31:25-30, "Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised." So the Scriptures say, "Don't find your hope, don't find your purpose, don't find meaning from external beauty. Cultivate your soul, and cultivate your mind." This woman opens up her mouth and wisdom falls out. When she speaks, she speaks as one who is wise. She doesn't respond, "Oh my God! Really?" She speaks with wisdom, and she is intelligent. Intelligence doesn't just happen. This is a woman who has spent time cultivating her soul, cultivating her mind, and her husband and children sing her praises. And they don't talk of her external beauty, do they? Why? Because beauty is vain; charm is deceitful. She has depth. She has not been defined by, she has not gotten by on, she has not let her value get caught up in fleeting physical beauty.

The other thing I want you to notice about this text is how self-assured this woman is because of the cultivation of her soul, because when she opens up her mouth, she speaks not only in wisdom but in kindness. That means she feels no need to, with her tongue, tear down other women whom she views as a threat to her. So all the cattiness just disappears

because she doesn't need to prove that she's better than anybody else and she's not threatened by other people's talents or beauties because she's cultivated her soul and not just her external beauty. So the Scriptures here say, "Put your hope in the Lord and not in external beauty."

Now the second one in this text is, "Put your hope in God, not just in external beauty, and put your hope in God, not a man." Years ago, my wife and I went to see Jerry Maguire. There's this scene where Renée Zellweger and Tom Cruise in the elevator and this man and women come in, and they're kind of all over each other basically making out in the elevator. And then he backs up and he signs (he's deaf) something to the girl, and then she kisses him. And Renée was like, "Aw!" And then she tells Tom, "He just said, 'You complete me.'" And then if we fast forward to the end of the movie, Tom Cruise runs into this living room where there are all these really bitter, angry women. He throws down his bags and says, "I'm good in the living room. They used to always send me into the living room. I could go into the living room and close the deal, so let's just do this. Tonight was a very big night for our little experiment. Tonight was a very big night for our little company, but it wasn't nearly as good as it could have been. It wasn't nearly what it could have been because you weren't there. You complete me." And Renée was choking back the tears going, "Shut up. You shut up. You had me at 'Hello!'" And everybody was like, "Aw, that's so sweet!" Everybody was like that in the theater. . .but me. That idea is a steaming pile of garbage. That idea that has woman after woman after woman on the search for a unicorn.

I'll be very honest with you here. My wife Lauren, she's just a girl. And I could be married to another woman and be happy. Do you know how I know she's the one for me? Because I'm married to her. That's how I know. If I were married to someone else, they would be for me. You see, in this idiot ideology that we've created with our movies, if one person marries the wrong person, doesn't that jack it up for everybody? Because that means if Lauren is not my girl and I married her anyhow, that means I married someone else's perfect one, which means they're forced to marry someone else's perfect one, which now means they're forced to marry someone else's perfect one. And so if you just do the little map, someone married someone 700 years ago married the wrong guy, and now we're all in trouble. This is a foolish, ridiculous idea. I'm just a man, and Lauren is just a girl. Lauren cannot complete me, cannot fulfill me, cannot make sense of my world and to expect her to is to put pressure on her that she will be unable to carry, will be unable to sustain and will be unable to bring any of those things into my life, which will create in me an anger towards her for not doing what she was never designed to do, created to do or able to do to begin with. So when a woman says, "This man will complete me. . .this man will make sense of my world. . .this man will make me know who I am. . .this man will heal my wounds," you are putting weight on the man that he will be unable to sustain and it will only be a matter of time before he develops hobbies to get out from under that expectation. He cannot carry it. Put your hope in God, not men. We're sinners. Which means sometimes on accident or sometimes on purpose, we're going to fail you and wound you. Don't ask us to be more than we were designed to be; we will fail you. Put your hope in God, not in external beauty and not in men.

Now from there, he goes, "Okay, since you put your hope in God instead of external beauty an in men, now be subject to the man that you have." He doesn't just leave this idea of submission and subjection loose in the wind for some backwoods fundamentalist to make women second class citizens. He clearly defines that it means and what it looks like for a woman to be in subjection to her husband, not to men but to her husband. He has three very clean ideas here. The first one is the idea of respect. What does it look like for a wife to be in submission to her husband? She respects her husband. Now listen to what the Bible says about this. Proverbs 21:19, "It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman." It is better for your husband to die in the desert than to live with you if you're a quarrelsome, fretful woman. If you constantly belittle and emasculate him, God says it's better that he would die in the desert. Proverbs 19:13, "A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain." If I could pull it into '09, it's better for your husband to be waterboarded than to let you berate him and belittle him constantly.

Proverbs 21:9, "It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife." In other words, don't berate, belittle, emasculate and attack your husband. Don't harp on his weaknesses.

Now some of you are going right now, "Chandler, you don't know my husband. He's an idiot." Okay, I will not take that from you. In my experience trying to disciple men, I have found that there are about 10-15% of men I've met that are serious about growing in the Lord, serious about following the Lord in how they engage their wives and children. You very well could be married to an immature, self-exalting idiot. I won't take that from you. That could very well be true. There's just two things. The first one is he was an idiot when you married him. He did not spring that on you last year. He was not some beautiful, self-sacrificing knight in shining armor and one day you went, "Something has changed." And then here's the second thing. This is going to be hard, but please hear me say this. Him being an idiot does not change the fact that, according to the Scriptures, God feels sorry for him that he lives with you and your constant belittling, berating and emasculating behavior. Here's how it happens. You grow up in a house with a domineering dad who takes advantage of your mom, and when you're 8-9 years old you go, "Not me. That will never happen to me. A man will not take advantage of me like that. A man will not hurt me like that." And you grow bitter and your husband and a dozen other men pay for your father's sins. Respect your husband. That means you take care of you, you grow in obedience to the Lord, you take care of your sin, you take care of your heart, your mouth, your bitterness and you grow in the Lord while you pray for him. You respect him; you don't run him down with your mouth. I don't care how big of an idiot he is, respect him.

The second idea in this text is the idea of purity. So not only is a wife to be respectful to her husband, but she is also to walk in some purity with him. Proverbs 31:10-12 says this, "An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels." Now ladies, pay attention to this because here's what the Bible just said to all men. "If you find this woman, you latch on to her because she's a rare thing. This is more rare than precious jewels." Has anybody ever stumbled onto precious jewels? Has anybody been on a walk in a field and is like, "Oh, a ruby!" It doesn't happen, does it? So this is saying that this is a rare woman. So let's listen to it. "An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life." She's pure. Here's what this text is saying. In her heart and in her mind, she is aware of his strengths, and she praises and encourages what he does well. In her heart and in her mind, she knows where he's weak, and she encourages and speaks life into where he's weak. She doesn't spend her time fantasizing about what it would look like to be married to someone else who didn't have those weaknesses. And in that safety net of trust, the Scriptures say the husband's heart feels safe and he'll open up and share. Do you realize that most men have been taught from a very early age to shut it down? So where we feel safe, we'll share, but where we don't feel safe, we put on the bravado. It's what we do. The Scriptures say when a man believes that the heart and mind of his wife are his, he trusts in her.

There's one more idea in here, and it's an idea that has historically been abused. It's the idea of the gentle and quiet spirit. Historically this has been abused by saying that women just shouldn't speak. They should have babies, cook dinner and shut up. That's how it's been abused. The problem with that is the Bible. And that's not what it's teaching. Instead, it's teaching that the wife's spirit in regards to her husband should be gentle and quiet. I'll unpack it like this. I'm doing all I can to be the kind of man God has asked me to be for my family. I fall short all the time. Thank God I've been given a woman like Lauren. Here's what she'll do. Maybe it's been a while since we had a good conversation about what's going on in my heart or what's going on in hers. She'll come into my study after we put the kids down and she'll go, "Hey, are you busy? Okay, what does he mean in Colossians 1 when he says, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone?'" That's a trap. My wife is smarter than me. She's not actually asking me that. Like sometimes I get her to help me with the Greek. She's smarter than me. Do you see what she's doing? There are times where she will do this. This is my favorite. She'll say, "Matt, I've got to do this thing Thursday night for the abuse group. Can you pray for me?" I'll go, "Yeah, baby." And then she'll close her eyes and bow her head right there. So I'll be like, "Oh, now? Father, I just pray for. . ." Do you

see what she's doing? She's wooing. She's gently leading. Do you see the difference between this and, "Why do you suck at leading our family spiritually? When are you going to do what Matt is telling you to do? When are you going to grow up and be a man?" Do you see the difference? Now honestly both of them have at their heart the same desire, for a man to engage at a deeper level. One of them gets it, and one of them does not. What you do in that moment when you emasculate him, it becomes you leading him, and then in the end you'll get a man who will just go, "Forget you, woman," and he'll pull back even farther. So this gentle, quiet spirit is not about just getting beat down and keeping your mouth shut when your husband is an idiot; it's learning how to engage him in such a way that he responds. And that's what submission looks like.

So I know there are some of you in here who are single women, and you're going, "Okay Chandler, what does this look like for me? What does this mean for me?" Let me do three things for you. The first thing I can tell you is find women who are like this and get around them. If you're single, find older, godly women and get around them, stalk them, show up at their house, find out what Pilates class they're in and get there. Where they are, be there. And then just for the record, I would give them authority. I would give those older, godly women who love their husbands like this authority. Which means if they say that your doofus boyfriend is an idiot, you break up with him. The second thing I would tell you is to take your own sanctification and spiritual development very, very seriously. The third thing I would tell you is going to be hard and I'm sorry, but I don't know how else to tell you. I recommend you take some time of solitude and silence and get to the bottom of how you really view men. Look at some of the relationships you've been in, what type of man you're attracted to, how those relationships end and begin to look for patterns of dysfunction and expectation put on a man that only Jesus Christ your Savior can fill and get your tail into Recovery.

Now to the boys. 1 Peter 3:7, "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." This is interesting because this is fraction of the length of what was commanded to women, but the list is actually longer. It's kind of funny because he breaks down detail for the woman, and then for the man, he just kind of gives broad strokes. So let me unpack this for you. "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way. . ." This is the same Greek word as the word "considerate." Husbands should live with their wives in a way that is considerate. If I could make it simple, I would say this. Get up, get off the couch. You have just as many biblical responsibilities at home as your wife does. So what ends up happening in the Christian world in particular is we divide it into "This is what I do as the man, and this is what she does as the woman." And then we like to pretend that her role on top of all of that is also to support us, but we don't put that street going back the other way where our job is also to support her in her calling at the home. So what ends up happening is the wife cooks dinner after watching the kids all day long, the husband comes home and his job now is to watch SportsCenter over and over and over again while his poor wife then has to go back and do the dishes, get the kids in the bath, put the kids to bed, and then at 10:15 at night, she finally has a second to breathe. Get up! If she cooks, you come home and you clean the dishes, help her set the table. Men, put your kids to bed at night. Let her breathe. Your wife has a soul. Do you get that? She's not your servant, and she's not a sex toy. She has a soul. Do you know what full day around children will do to you mentally? Put them to bed at night and give her those three hours off, for your own safety. Put them in the bath, get them in their pajamas, read to them their Bible story, say their prayers, tuck them in and kiss their faces. When your wife pulls into the driveway with a car full of groceries, you press pause on the TV, you self-exalting moron. Do you know what generations before did? They had to miss it and go help their wives. God gave you a pause button on your television. Not only that, but SportsCenter is on over and over and over again. Get up. Are you serious? She's not your slave! Get up! Be considerate. It's your role to feel her out. Sometimes she's stressed out of her mind and you need to get her out of there. Sometimes she's done and needs adult conversation and you've got to get her out of there. There's nothing biblical that says she's the one who vacuums the living room. And on and on I could go. You be considerate. You live with your wife in a way that considers her soul, considers her mind, considers her emotions.

Not only are we to be considerate, but we are to show honor with her as the weaker vessel. This idea of weaker vessel is actually the same idea as porcelain. So we treat our wives like porcelain. Let me get real simple on how I believe a husband shows honor to his wife. There are multiple ways, but I think they come in two main layers. The first one is I think it's our role as husbands to honor our wives by developing and creating space for their gifts to grow. Psalm 128:3 says a woman who lives with a godly man will be like a fruitful vine. Which means she'll produce, and that's not referring to children. I'll use my marriage in regards to failing and hopefully getting some traction. My wife is right brained and is a big time artist. She is very creative, very artsy with all the joy and the pain that comes with that personality type. So she writes music. In fact, we sang one of her songs here this morning. You Are Faithful, that was one of Lauren's songs that she wrote. She loves to write music, she loves to paint, she loves to draw and she loves to decorate. She's as right brained as right brained gets. So over the last three years, we have bought a piano, bought a MacBook Pro with tools on it for her to record, cut and tinker with her songs, and we are constantly trying to create space for her to just be able to write, to be able to think, to be able to worship and to be able to paint. She's been actively involved in the Recovery ministry here at the Village for years. Every Thursday night (which if my Friday), I'm at home with our three kids while Lauren loves on women in Recovery.

Now because I know some of you masculine, macho CEO's have something going through your mind right now, let me say this also. The Village Church runs somewhere between 7,000-8,000 adults on a given weekend. There are 90 men and women on staff that are managed across three campuses. To use the shepherd/sheep analogy that's in the Scriptures, the shepherd rarely gets to play in the middle with the healthy sheep when they're having a barbecue and playing volleyball. He's on the fringes where the wolves and sheep with rabies are. So a great deal of my week is spent walking through the tragedies, heartaches and sins of other men and women. On top of it all, we are constantly taking sniper shots from men and women who disagree with how we do things, sometimes to a level that's just crazy.

Two weeks ago, I sent out an e-mail that said, "Hey, Saturday nights at 7:00, we're going to try to utilize technology a little bit better so that we might have a dialogue. So during the sermon, you'll be able to text in questions as I preach, and then I'll answer them as soon as the sermon is over." Really there were two motives behind this. The first one is to dialogue a little bit about what we're talking about, because that's healthy. The other one is that I don't want to lose touch with where you are. So what happens on Saturday night at 7:00 is I actually get to tweak my message moving into Sunday morning because I'm going, "Oh, that's a question that people had that I did not answer." We thought it was really healthy. Well, I got this real hateful and spiteful e-mail this week that said, "This sounds like a last ditch effort of a dying church to entice the next generation to come." The reason I giggle is because in that e-mail I also said, "Hey, we grew by 1,500 last weekend." So do you see what I mean by crazy?

And then just because I have you, can I say this? We have not created a system here that hides from you. We'll receive any bit of rebuke and any bit of critique. But you sign your name when you send stuff in, you immature, weak little cowards. You sign your name, you silly, pathetic little boy. You don't take jabs behind an alias. Who does that? So in any realm, we're not above reproach. In any realm, you can question, you can come in and have your questions answered. You don't take jabs at us behind some alias while you sit in the crowd and do nothing, you narcissistic zero. Sign your name! I probably need to get some help. I'll work through that.

Alright, back to work. So we show honor to our wives by letting their gifts develop. So I'm going to create space, I'm going to come home exhausted and teetering on the line of wanting to sob or punch a hole in something and I'm going to get on the floor and play Transformers so mama can get out of there and breathe, so mama can paint, so mama can go write songs. There's no one in this room who walks in any more stressors than I do or is taxed for time any more than I am, and we make the space. We show them honor. Because God has not just called me, He's called her.

I couldn't show you the second way we honor our wives exegetically, but I think it's worked really well. I lose all the little arguments on purpose. Here's what I mean. If you look at Christian couples 90% of the time, on major issues, they come to consensus. They look at the Bible, they pray, they talk with one another, they might even seek wisdom from outside, they make the big decision together and it's great. 10% of the time, they can't come to consensus. Now the Scriptures say that when they can't come to consensus, the weight falls on the man to make the call. So the man then needs to say, "I love you, I hear that, I'm concerned about that too, but I think we need to go left here." And they do that, knowing and understanding that all the implications of them hearing wrong fall not only on them, but on their entire family. Since that's true and since twice now in my marriage I've had to say, "I know, baby, but I think we need to go this way," I'm going to lose every other conversation. I do not pick the music we listen to in the car, I do not pick the movies we go and see, I did not pick the car, I did not pick the couch we bought, I did not pick the colors of the wall, I did not pick the flooring we put down, I did not pick the house that we bought and on and on I could go. Now listen to me. I have strong opinions about everything. I have strong opinions about music, strong opinions about movies, strong opinions about style. My wife's and my opinions about how we decorate the home are in different universes. That doesn't change the fact that our house looks like a cottage. I've been urban my whole life and love urban and love modern. My workspace isn't even that. Somehow my workspace is like a cottage. I'm just waiting for a gnome to run out from beneath my desk. Ask her. I have never said, "Could I have just this little space to decorate how I like it?" Never. I'll lose all of that. I'll go see Jerry Maguire. Why? Because there's coming another day where I'm going to have to go, "Okay, but we're going left. I do hear you, I do respect you and I do love you." And my job in that moment is to lovingly lead her, and her job is to lovingly submit. I have just found it far easier to make that hard call when she wins everything else. We show our wives honor by cultivating their skills, talents and desires, and we show our wives honor by losing the silly fights.

The last two ideas here in this text are really about why you shouldn't abuse your headship. The first idea is that we should show them honor as the weaker vessel because there are coheirs with us. I would say it this way. A woman is not a second hand citizen. We are equal. Now you can have equals with a leader. Now I know there are some business theories that would try to contradict that, but take the Village. The Village table is round; it is not rectangle. I am not king here. I do lose votes all the time. I do say, "I think we should do this," and we end up not going that way. Because there is a give and take that comes when the table is round. So this coheir idea is saying that the table is round. In a hierarchy, what happens is I say, "Do this," and the person below me on the hierarchy goes, "I had better do that or I'm going to get fired." Now, when the table is round, you have to lead differently because you don't want to say, "Do this. . . Because I said so." You want to have dialogue, you want things to be pushed back on, you want an environment where it's okay to go, "Um, I think that might be a dumb idea." We are coheirs with one another. It's this idea that you're going to stand in front of God right along side your wife, and you're a fool to be emotionally, physically and mentally abusing God's daughter. You're coheirs.

And then this next one has been such an intriguing idea to me as long as I've been in ministry, because the Scriptures say you'll disqualify yourself from ministry if you don't do this well. The other thing that is very interesting here is it says that a man who doesn't lead his wife well and doesn't love his wife well, his prayers will be hindered. And it's not that he won't pray, but it's that God's not hearing his prayers. I'll just read this text to you. 1 Timothy 3:4-5, "He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" So he's saying here, "If you want to be a leader in the church, the litmus test for that is how well you love your wife." It's like the marriage becomes the proving ground of compassion, gentleness, grace and mercy, and all that God requires of an elder is proven first in the home. And where it's not proven in the home, he's disqualified. It's why there's been a little bit of frustration over us canceling Saturday night services, but we've been working on that for five years. Do you know why? When we got to the church, we were all in our 20's. Who cared when we all had infants. Nobody cared that Saturday was a work day when we all had infants. Our kids are getting in to the 1st grade now. That means that you can give us Thursday and Friday off all you want, but if our kids are

in school, that leaves us zero days with our family. That's not happening. I've said it personally to the elders for six years, "You had better solve this thing before our kids hit the 1st grade." And thank God He solved it, and we're not going back, not for an extended period of time, not before our kids get through their soccer games and softball games. And I didn't ride that Promise Keepers pendulum all the way to the right that says I have to be at all 492 soccer games a year that my kid plays. But we need to be present, and we need to be with our kids. If you fail this test, you're disqualified to do what we're doing. In the same way, your prayers are hindered and the ministry that you have a desire to do and be a part of is hindered when you can't love one woman well. And this is what He commands of the man.

Now this is hard stuff, is it not? If I can be real honest with you, there are still days where I am driving home and in my head I'm thinking, "I've done this. . .I've put up with this. . .I've accomplished this. . .I've got this done. . .I deserve this." I still walk in my front door thinking that. In fact, right now in that moment as I said that, a part of my brain went, "Yeah! You do deserve it, Matt." But I don't. And then I walk in all of a sudden as if my wife hadn't had a day, as if she hasn't been obedient and it's, "I deserve this, I deserve this and I deserve this." It's foolishness, it's sinfulness and it's not what God's called me to. God's called me to serve my wife and my children, to die to myself, to love them like Jesus Christ loved the church and to give of myself for them. Do you know how easy it is for me to get in that mode? Do you know how easy it is for a man to get in that mode? Do you know how easy it is for a woman to tear down her man? She doesn't have to be taught that. Man doesn't have to be taught that. It's intrinsic, we're sinners and we need the cross of Jesus Christ. Do you know how often men do this? Do you know how often women do this?

In fact, do you know how feminized church in general has become? All across the nation, the numbers are that churches are by far filled with women, not men. Now there are several reasons for that. One of them is we have feminized almost everything. Worship music is the worst. We're just like, "I want to crawl in Your lap and rub on Your beard. Kiss my neck, Jesus." And most men are just like, "I just don't really want to rub anybody's beard." I don't understand that. I don't want Jesus to kiss my neck. I don't believe I want a hickey from Jesus; I'm just not sure about that. So what ends up happening is a woman drags her husband to church and then tries to be the Holy Spirit on the way home. She drags him to church where we sing about stroking Jesus' beard, the message usually isn't preached to men, it's preached to women, which means it's highly emotive and very flowery and then you get in the car and the wife the whole way home is like, "Did you hear him? When are you going to do what he's saying? Why do you hate us?" And she just nits at him and nits at him and just emasculates him. You've got to stop. I promise you, if you'll become the woman God has asked you to become, God will come after your man through your godliness. I've never known a man to respond to nagging. Even if you beat him down enough to make him come to church with you all the time, I just don't understand how that's a win.

And men, I have found this culture to be just filled with weak, narcissistic cowards. When are you going to grow up? Paul says, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1 Corinthians 13:11). "Well, what about my needs?" Grow up, love your wife well, serve her, care for her and get help where you find yourself to be domineering. We need the cross, and we need the grace of Christ in this. We're going to have good days and bad days. We're going to have days where one does better than the other. But may God strengthen this core, beautiful relationship that He's given us.

The reason I'm talking about marriage in the middle of a series on sanctification is because nothing sanctifies you more quickly than marrying another human being. You have no real depth of understanding how depraved, how selfish and how self-exalting you are until you marry another human and live in the house with them. So if you ever hear anybody say, "Our first year of marriage was really rough," usually what happened is they lived by themselves beforehand and there were no problems, but then they got married and went wrong. Yeah, when you have two selfish people who are sinners living in a house, it's going to go bad. So God's given you an opportunity. Do you know why it's difficult? Because some of you are like, "I'm doing all I can, Matt, but married crazy." Okay, then God, the Sovereign of the universe, knew



you needed crazy to detach your hands from the things of this world and put them on Him. You are being sanctified in this relationship. Of course it will sting, of course it will be hard, of course there will be difficult days, but you'll be sanctified. You don't get sanctified by running but when you teach your kids with your life, not just your mouth. It's a horrible shame that so many in our generation had to learn loyalty from the dog. Christ help us.

I know there are women in here who have used their tongue to tear down, attack, bad-mouth, chew up, emasculate, berate and belittle your husbands. You need to repent. I'm not saying your husband is right, I'm not saying he's perfect and I'm not saying he doesn't deserve some of what you gave him; I'm saying that God has not given it to you to do it. And you need to repent before the Lord, and you need to seek your husband's forgiveness. And I know you're in here, you overgrown, immature little boy with a wife and a house. It's got to be time for you to take seriously the things of God. It's got to be time for you to seriously step up, to begin to love your wife well and to work on your own sanctification and healing. Some of you are getting in consistent fights with your wife over nothing, taking everything she says personally as some personal attack. That's a sign of your own insecurities and pride. It's what Recovery is for. It's what biblical counseling here is for, to get to the bottom of some of those deep issues. Please don't keep doing nothing in the hopes that something is going to change. Some of you are in the middle of divorce or already divorced and carry a great deal of pain. I can't preach the cross of Jesus Christ to you enough. I can't preach the forgiveness of sins and the healing work of Jesus Christ to you enough. All you can do at this point is own your part, press into the Lord and let Him heal you, let Him work on you, let him reveal in you. May God strengthen our marriages here, and as I pray daily, may He raise up a group of men here that exemplify what He's called us to be in Christ, self-sacrificing, self-giving, gentle warrior saints. He's drawing them in here. We're one of the few churches in the country that have more men than women. Now may He sanctify us.