

If you have your Bible go to Genesis chapter 1. We need to do some setup before we get into Colossians or I won't be able to show you the weight of what is going on in Colossians. Probably by far the most surprising thing to me in my last fifteen years of following Jesus Christ have been those times that God and I have collided. I still don't know that I've won one, and when I did win a couple of times, I actually lost. When we've collided and I've been asked to do something in Scripture or by the Holy Spirit leaning on my heart to move in a direction or do something that I didn't necessarily want to do, that has led me into a greater joy and a greater understanding of how good and mighty and beautiful God is. As I have learned submission to the Creator God, I've walked in greater joy than when I tried to do it my own way, walk my own way or think that I was smarter than God in a particular area of my life.

So let me give you just a couple of examples of how I've learned this. I should have just learned this because the Bible teaches it, but I'm not that kid. I never was. I was the "Don't touch that it's hot." "Well, we'll see about that." That's how I was wired. I had a lot of stitches, broken bones and trips to the hospital. ER doctors knew me by name. They were like, "Uhhh. . .Hey Matt." And so, that's not how I learn, unfortunately. So what I'm trying to do is save you from that and let you learn by my blood. Really the first place that the Lord and I collided was the invitation that I responded to, which was "Come to Jesus. He's awesome. He'll make life all better." And so I'm thinking, "Yes, I'll take some of that!" And so I came down, did the mantra and said the prayer. God really had worked in my heart and worked in my life. I was very much in love with God. And then God started addressing me very early on about moral issues. He began to reshape my view of sex and reshape my view of alcohol. He didn't destroy those views, although in some instances those views needed to be destroyed. He just reshaped them. "This is why I created that. You need to use that and walk in that like I created it."

Some of those things I didn't care for. Some of those things I didn't like. But as I began to submit myself to God's creative design, it was amazing that what had created some heartache in my life and had created some sorrow in my life now began to create hope. In the end, as I began to walk in those things according to God's design, a great deal of joy and a great deal of understanding in the nature and character of God were given to me. I had some really godly friends who went to Texas A&M University. In the end it was a guy named Jason Post and a guy named Chad Hawk, who were just some guys who really really loved the Lord. I had met them, of all places, at youth camp. The Lord just mingled our souls together. They were at Texas A&M, and so I wanted to go to Texas A&M to kind of be where they were. I was up late one night drinking coffee and reading a book, and it just really began to be impressed that that wasn't the direction God was sending me. Now it did not say in the Bible, "Don't go to Texas A&M." I don't know how to explain this. I just knew in my heart that wasn't where we were going. So Jason and Chad were living in these apartments called the Viking Apartments, very ghetto apartments. You could kill your food at that apartment if you were willing to eat certain types of rodents. I wasn't moving into paradise, but it's college. You don't care when you're in college. At that point, I didn't even know what boy smelled like. I didn't learn that smell until I got married. We had already planned it out. So I had to call them and go, "Guys, I'm not coming." I didn't know where I was going, and then through a random set of circumstances, I began to see that God was leading me out to Abilene, Texas to go to a small Baptist college known as Hardin-Simmons University. Now, at this time, I don't even know where this university is. I literally have to open up a map of Texas and go, "B.....to.....no. No. No, sir. No, sir. I am not going to Abilene. I'm not doing it." So I'm a military brat. I've always lived in or around a major metropolitan area. Abilene is the major metropolitan area in West Texas. It's the city. It's where people come for supplies. So in the end, I'm just going, "Lord, I don't really want to do that. That's not really where I want to go."

And then the Lord reminded me that He rarely asks. And so through more detail that I can't get into, I end up in Abilene, Texas. I've learned now that it's not because God was angry with me, but rather He had a plan for me. There was a whole series of things that happened out there that got me in front of you. Namely, one of my potluck roommates was a guy by the name of Rich Cottle, whose parents and particularly his mother Elaine went to Highland Village First Baptist Church and ended up being on the search team that came and got me eight years ago.

When I was in college and we grew bored in Abilene (which was always), we would come into Dallas to play because there was more to do than just play hide and seek in the Super Wal-Mart. And so we would stay in Highland Village off of Remington, and on Sunday morning would come to Highland Village First Baptist Church. So actually I attended this church several times in college with Elaine Cottle and Rich Cottle and the crew. It was a really kind of just an ironic twist in how God was leading my life. So there were all these things that happened out there. I met my wife and got married to Lauren, and here's what I learned. When you put two sinners in a house together, there is conflict. It doesn't matter if they both love the Lord. It doesn't matter if they both care deeply about each other. There just tends to be some conflict. There tends to be some rubbing. So when I hit that spot in any area of my life, I want to go back to the text and I want to find out what God tells me to do and what He commands me to do in regards to the difficulties of that point. We've done this with money. We have asked how to live with our money, what we are to do with our money. At that time when we got married, I was making a whopping like \$11,500 a year. And so how do we divide that up? How do we spend that? How do we get more of that? We were kind of having those conversations. And we learned this is what God wants us to do with our money. There was a period of time in which we didn't have television. We did, but we just didn't have any channels. We had a TV, we just didn't have any channels. Because there was no money to go towards that if we were going to give like we felt God had commanded and led us to give.

But on marriage, I started going to the text. And there is nothing in the Bible in regards to commands on the man in regards to living with his wife that is pleasant or easy to read. I don't know if you are aware of the commands of God, particularly on the man. Now the woman doesn't have it any easier. But if you were to go, "How do I fix this?" and you begin to read, "You die to yourself. You love her like Christ loved the church in that He gave His life for her. You love her and you romance her. You befriend her, regardless of her," you start reading that stuff. And my first thought was, "It's not fair! This is not fair." Because, to be honest with you, I didn't even study the female side and what God had asked her to do. I'm just reading what I have to do, and I'm going, "I don't like this." And so once again, God just very gently goes, "You want fair, bro? Is that what you want? Because if you get fair, you get hell. Do you want fair or do you want grace?" And so, once again, it's another argument that I lost.

And so I began to try to do that, to live that out and to implement those things in my marriage. Now I didn't just go, "Let's do those things" and then I started on a Tuesday to do those things. From that moment on up until this day, it is trial and error with good weeks and bad weeks. It turned from good days and bad days into good weeks and bad weeks into good months to bad days. And on and on it goes to where I have a very strong, really beautiful marriage to a woman I love very much. We will celebrate eleven years married this month and thirteen years together. And she's still there. Like when I go home, I think she's going to be there. It's working well. We love one another. We've learned to fight fair. We've learned to disagree with grace. We've learned to walk with each other deeply. In all of these things, what I've learned is one of the greatest most pleasant surprises is that the commands of God, as difficult as they are at first and as difficult as they are to hear and understand, have led me into greater joy and deeper life. They have not robbed me of anything. I am trying to be as honest as I can. Initially they felt at times as though they were trying to rob me. So as God tries to reshape my thinking on this, and as He tries to line me up with how He created things to be here, there have been parts of me that have gone, "Nuh uh. I'm not. I think I'm smarter than You here. I know I did the eighth grade twice, but I'm smarter than You here. I think this way would work better." Or I act like God is ignorant to certain things, "Well, You don't know that I'm making \$11,500. Now I get this. If I was making six figures, I completely understand this. But I don't have it." So

then I start having a pity party. "You know we don't even have cable, God. I don't even know what's going on in the world." This is during dial-up Internet. Some of you might not even recall that. You remember that noise. You had to wait like seven minutes to even get online, and then if you were going to download a picture you had to leave and go grocery shopping and come back. We're so spoiled now. We live in world of the Jetsons where you press the popcorn button on the microwave and you've probably got your computer in your purse or sitting next to you. You might even be using it right now as your Bible to take notes. In the end, it was just a different age. So I would barter back and forth with the Lord. "How can You expect me to give this percentage away? How can You expect me to be generous in this area when I don't have anything hardly to live on? Like there's only so much Ramen noodle soup a brother can do. He needs protein." I would say that only to have God come in and say, "You're going to need to trust Me here." And really what it all boils down to is, "Do you trust Me?" That's the question over and over again in all His commands. "Do you truly and genuinely trust that I am for you, that I love you and that My desire is to lead you into life?" That's the bottom line question.

This idea of submission is not wildly popular, and it's definitely not popular in regards to the relationship between husband and wife. In fact, there is this real peculiar thing happening in culture right now. We are actually trying to redefine marriage, which if you'll even just ponder that for just a little bit, it's borderline insane. Let's just redefine children. Let's just redefine them. "Is that a child?" "No, that's not a child. That's a man." "Well why is that?" "Because I said so. Because that's it." "Well, historically, if you're three, you're a child." "Well, not anymore. Get a job. Not anymore. Pay taxes." It's just this kind of crazy. "Let's take what has historically been this, what is Biblically this, what has always been this and let's completely redefine and change it into something that it hasn't been known as." It removes marriage and the relationship between the man and the woman from it's mooring so now it's just being tossed about, and we become a culture that is driven by nothing but our own self-indulgence and pursuit of personal pleasure. If that becomes the fabric of society, society begins to deteriorate. And I'm not a "the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are upon us" kind of guy. I'm not a "television is the demon box" or "don't watch rated-R movies you'll do meth and kill your children." I'm not that guy, but I'm telling you that if you take something as central as the basic foundation building block of society and you begin to unravel it and deconstruct it and reconstruct it in a perverse manner, you have started something, the ramifications of which are going to absolutely destroy culture and society by and large.

And so before we can get into the quick blurb in Colossians, I want to read for you how God created the man and the woman and how our relationship works with one another. I think there are going to be a couple of points here where some of you go, "Oh no he didn't." But, all I'm doing is reading the Bible. That's all. So if you have a problem, it's not with me. If you get riled up about something, here is what I would ask you to do. You check your heart. If you find your blood pressure rising a little bit, check your heart, and then we will see what the Holy Spirit wants to do.

Genesis 1:26. "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Do you hear the Trinity there? He's not talking to Himself, although He is. "And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And then if you'll keep reading there, it says, "And behold God said that all that has been created, is under your feet." That's going to be echoed later in Psalm 8 when God says that He made man a little bit lower than the angels and put everything in the creative order under his feet.

Now let's look at it down in the dirt in the ground. So flip over to Genesis 2. That was kind of up high, and now we'll get into the dirt of it. Genesis chapter 2, we are going to pick it up in verse 15. "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now let me stop, and start chatting with you. So God creates man and woman, both of them in His image. Now this idea of being image bearers has been hijacked a little bit, and we think that since we have personality, God has personality because we're image bearers. Since we have a will, then God has a will. Since we have emotions, God has emotions. Now I'm not saying that in the end that's not true, but I'm saying that contextually, if you'll look at what the text is teaching, He's not using the idea of image bearer in that light. Here's He is saying that we are God's representative rule in creation. So if you watch the Pharaohs or the Caesars, they would erect statues of themselves in those areas of the kingdoms that they ruled. That statue was there as a reminder of the representative rule of the Caesars or the Pharaohs. So Ramses II would put statues of himself all over ancient Egypt to remind the people in the farthest parts of his kingdoms that these are his lands, his people and that they belong to him. So you and I being image bearers is about God's representative rule here on Earth. This is also where we get the idea of stewardship, because ultimately you and I do not own the Earth. You and I do not ultimately rule the Earth. We have been placed here by God and have been given representative rule to live out the shalom, the world as God made it, the peace of God so that we might show that there is God, that He is good, gracious and beautiful, and He created man and woman to do this.

Now when you get into Genesis 2, you start seeing the details of the story. God creates man first. We'll hear all about that later in Corinthians. The man begins to do the work of representative rule before the woman is there. He begins to name all of the animals. Now, what you'll notice here is Adam doesn't say to God, "Hey, it's not good to be alone down here." He doesn't say to God, "I can't find a suitable helper." God says, "It's not good for Adam to be alone, and there is not a suitable helper fit for Adam on earth." And so watch the play of God here. "Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." That's one of my favorite verses in the Bible. It's one that I make Lauren read out loud often. Now, that was probably inappropriate, and I'll probably get rebuked by the elders.

So in the end you've got man in the garden doing what God had commanded him to do in regards to representative rule. And then God says that it's not good for man to be alone in there and there is not a suitable helper for him. So He gives man a helper in Eve and institutes marriage. So in regards to God's creative design, a monogamous, heterosexual relationship between man and woman where there are children being born and filling the earth and subduing it, creating, sustaining and building society is God's plan. Notice here that, in regards to a suitable helper, God does not give Adam buddies. God does not give Adam several women. God gives Adam a suitable helper in woman, and the two become one flesh (that's procreation) and they are not to be separated. So long-term, a heterosexual covenant relationship between the man and the woman is God's plan with the man having ultimate authority in the marriage relationship and the woman called to be his suitable helper. She is put along side him. Remember the plurals in Chapter 1, "He made them. He charged them." So this is not a scenario in which the husband is king and has a scepter that he can whack the woman with and make her do whatever he wants. You can try it that way (and a lot of guys do),

but that's going to take us to Genesis 3, and I'm not ready for Genesis 3 yet. But here is what God gives the woman to the man for: companionship, procreation and to help with earthly dominion. The woman is given to the man for those reasons. Nowhere in the Scriptures do we find that the man is the helpmate of the woman, but the woman is the helpmate of the man.

And so right now, I already know I'm sexist right now. I am old school. I keep Lauren chained up in the kitchen. I don't let her go out unless she asks for permission, and then maybe I'll let her go out. All those kinds of caricatures are simply not true, and men in Scripture will get absolutely lit up when they commit the sins of either passivity or aggression. So men get absolutely attacked by the Scriptures when they passively force their wives into action to do what they've been called to do or when they aggressively either verbally, emotionally, physically or in any other way, pound their wives into submission. This is a "them." He created them and commanded them to fill the earth and subdue it. And although men have been given the ultimate authority in the marriage relationship, the family relationship and in the church, ultimately this is a partnership that we have been put together for in regards to revealing to the world around us the glory and beauty of God Almighty.

Now, this would be a lot easier if it wasn't for Genesis 3. So look at that. In Genesis 3 the Fall occurs, sin occurs and treason occurs. The reason God gives the "You can eat of all of the trees in the Garden but don't touch this one" singular command is to simply show the joy we can possess in God under His submission. Listen to the command. It's not crazy. "Eat of anything you want. Anything that there is, is yours. Just don't touch this." The command is essentially to enjoy all that He's made and trust Him. That's not harsh or crazy command. It shows the steadfastness within the Godhead that He is not after your begrudging submission, but He's after your joy. "Eat, drink, be merry and enjoy the wife of your youth. Enjoy all that I've created. You're in the garden, naked with your spouse. This is not a bad gig. I've given you dominion over everything that exists."

We find out that there is no toil so man or woman are working at this point. Man is naming the animals and the woman has been given charge by God to be his helpmate so she is helping in some of those tasks. The relationship is complementarian, which means they are absolutely equal and absolutely seen as lofty and beautiful and significant in the eyes of God, both of them are. And yet, God has given them distinct roles, and they are operating in those distinct roles. There is nothing but joy and happiness in this, and God simply goes, "Don't touch the tree." Biblical history begins with the Creation narrative, but as you being to study the Bible, you'll see that before Creation occurs there is this great battle in heaven where Lucifer, an angel and one of the most powerful angels, decides that he wants God's throne. Despite the fact that he's a created being and should know better, he decides to rebel against the God of the universe. It's never going to work. So I took my boy to see The Karate Kid. If you think I'm a bad father for that go ahead and e-mail me so I can go ahead and delete that. But in the end, I took him to see The Karate Kid, and ever since we got home from seeing it, he wants to fight. But I have yet to meet a four-year-old that can take me. I'm just going to throw that out there. Now he can hurt me if I'm not looking, but if we square off toe-to-toe, I've got it. It doesn't even matter if he gets a shot in. I've just got it. So it is when you want to spar with the Creator God of everything. You just don't win. So Lucifer gathers a group of angels and they make war against the God of the Universe. They rebel. What is their rebellion? "I want to be God. I want to be God. I will not submit to God." And he wages war against God, and he loses. Surprise, surprise.

And so now the Fall occurs when the serpent or the Devil (Paul writes about all of this later so though it's not simply a story but that it's historical fact) in the end, lies in the same way that he lead the rebellion against God. "God simply doesn't want you to be God. Go ahead and eat the fruit. God is trying to rob you." This is the lie regarding authority and submission that exists to this day. "God is trying to take from you. . . God is trying to rob from you something that would make you happy, something that would give you greater joy, something that would give you greater life." It's the lie that all of us buy into. Even Romans 1 says we believe the lie over the truth of God. What's the lie? The lie is, "I'm smarter.

My way is better. My way of handling my marriage, my money, etc. is better than God's way." And so Eve buys into this lie. And Adam is there too. Once again, remember I said that the error that some men make is passivity. They just stand there and they don't fulfill God's call on their lives to lead their homes and their families well. Adam is standing there. He is not off the hook. In fact, when God comes to the garden here in a second, He doesn't ask for Eve. When Paul talks about original sin, he does not address Eve. He addresses Adam, because Adam is given ultimate authority over the family unit.

The serpent deceives Eve, she eats of the truth and hands it to her dumb husband. He eats the fruit and the whole thing is fractured. This whole kind of beautiful, rhythmic, perfect, harmonized relationship between man and woman is fractured, and we're going to read about that now. We are going to pick it up in verse 15. He first addresses the serpent, which is really the first Messianic prophecy if you'll look there in verse 15. He says, "I will put enmity there between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." So that's the first Messianic prophecy that through the line of humanity would come one that is going to be struck on the heel but in the end is going to crush the serpent's head.

Let's get to the woman in verse 16. "To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children."" Now, is that true? I've been in the room three times. Trust me, it's true. Now my wife has a complete theology around the epidural. She will point towards pain in childbearing as a part of the Fall and not a part of God's creative design. She will then point to the epidural as God's common grace given to women so that they no longer have to endure the pain of childbirth. And so with the more children we have, the earlier she asks for the epidural. On Norah she asked me for it on the way to the hospital. I was like, "We don't have those kinds of drugs at the house. I've got some Advil maybe, but I don't think you should take it." She's got a whole theology. I would do it in the natural way, but I'm a man and that's not my role in this thing. Although I do lead my home, you don't pick that fight. I don't think you pick that fight. So let's go. "To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."" So the woman is going to constantly rebel against the headship of her husband in one way or another. She will manipulate and she will control. There are all sorts of things that can play out. But here's the flip side of it. The man will respond to the woman trying to overshadow his authority by either passively letting her or aggressively trying to beat her into submission, whether that's emotionally, verbally or physically. So what was once great harmony now is shattered by the Fall.

Look at the man though. "And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."" Now the man has been commanded by God to cultivate all that is on the earth. He is to be a representative ruler of God Almighty, and that starts primarily in the family unit and then rolls out to society and culture at large as he's been commanded. "Have children with the wife of your youth, fill the earth, and subdue it." Now what ends up happening to the man is that all he was commanded by God to cultivate now wars against him. All that we were commanded to build is now difficult. Life is now difficult. There is no way to make life not difficult, because of the Fall. Now you can do some things in regards to wisdom that makes it easier, but in the end life is hard. Man was also commanded by God to cultivate his wife. Was he not? This once again gets into the relationship between the man and woman where we will at times kind of bump heads with one another. Now in the end you get through the Old Testament. If you're smart and you know your Bible, here is where you should be going. Right now the Bible has said this, "God made a man for a woman."

Now I don't believe in the mythical "one." As if there is one person for you, and if you don't marry that one person then you are destined to misery for all of your life. Here is why that simply can't be true. If that's true, then some cat in 1429 screwed it up for all of us. If he, Christopher Columbus, married the wrong woman, that means that her right man married the wrong woman. So now do that exponentially. Now by this point in history, nobody stands a chance. And so "the one" is like the unicorn. It's like the Oompa Loompa. It's like Big Foot. Now, I know some of you are like, "Now wait a minute! I've seen Big Foot." "No, you haven't." I know some of you are obsessed with "the one." You know how I know Lauren is "the one?" Because I'm married to her. That's how I know she's the one. Is she perfect for me? In some ways, yes, and in some ways, we have some issues that we have to work through. We have at least three times in our marriage had to get outside of our marriage to seek counseling and let someone intervene and give us wisdom. There have been these moments where we are just simply at an impasse and we either disagree on this or disagree on that and we really have come to a place where we needed help. So we've had to go to a Biblical counselor and let them sort it out. We had to let them give us advice and then pull back and pray as they've asked us to pray to make a decision and move forward.

In the end this is what God has commanded. He has commanded Lauren and me to have children and to continue to fill the earth and subdue it. Now, that's God's ideal. In the whole rest of the Old Testament, outside of some spots here and there, you're going to see the opposite of God's ideal. You will see polygamy, adultery, homosexuality and confusion over gender roles. You're going to see these things begin to take place, but you'll also get these glimpses of God's design once again in Scripture. So when people try to do when you teach this as the ideal, they'll go into the text and say, "Well, David had this many wives. Well, Solomon had 700 wives." Yeah, and that didn't go well for them. They also at certain points sacrificed children. You can't read most of the Old Testament as instructive. If there is instruction it is "Don't do this." I mean how many times does He have to destroy the joint before we go, "Ohhh, okay. I get it. Don't do that because He blows up cities. Okay, I won't do that." You get these glimpses in the Song of Solomon where you see that this is what it could be in Christ. You move into the New Testament and you've once again got God calling people through the power of Jesus Christ back to His ideal. And that takes us to Colossians.

I think there is much more that could be said here, but I'm doing a series on authority in the Fall. We will dissect it in much greater detail then. For now, let's go to Colossians 3. I'm going to pick it up in verse 18. "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." So I just want to stop there and say a couple of things. When addressing the relationship between a man and woman, the Bible never starts with the man despite the fact that man is ultimately responsible for his family. The Scriptures never begin with the man. Here's why. No man can lead a woman who refuses to follow. I don't care if you're Patton, it's not happening. If a woman goes, "I don't care what you say. I don't care what you think. I'm doing what I want," it doesn't matter how good of a man you are. It doesn't matter. No man can lead a woman who refuses to follow, so He always begins with the woman. Now what does it look like to love your husband in submission? I'll just read through some of these. The woman should love the man and submit to the man by respecting him. That's Ephesians 5. You respect him. There is a way to confront your husband respectfully, and then there is a way to not confront your husband, even if what you need to confront him over is true. So my wife has learned this and has it down to a science. Even sometimes I know I'm being manipulated because it's great and I know she's trying to do it in the right way. So if I start to wane in regards to leading our family in worship and leading our family in regards to devotionals and reading the Bible with the kids and singing and praying, she doesn't come to my study and go, "Why do you hate our family? Why do you want to see our kids damned for eternity? Why do you suck?" None of that happens. She simply comes in and will talk about the tenderness of Audrey's heart or the tenderness of Reid's heart. Or she will talk about seeing this behavior. And she's really hoping that the Lord would take hold of them. That's Lauren respectfully going, "Bro, you need to plug back in here. I'm glad things are going well at the church, but your first call is to your family." Or sometimes, even shadier than that she'll go, "Hey what do you think Ephesians 5 means in regards to the children and their parents? What do you think He means when He says that we should impart the glory of God to the next generation? Like how does that work itself out in a home? I mean I was just talking to Kristen, and I'm just not sure."

And I'm like, "Okay, here what I think it means. . .and I'm sorry." So there is a way to respectfully engage your husband and that's what the Scriptures call you to. The woman should love the man by submitting to his gentle, sacrificial leadership.

There have been multiple occasions in our marriage where I've asked Lauren to simply "Trust me on this one." I have lived with her in such a way where I have honored her, loved her, heard her advice, asked her advice and then on many occasions have just submitted. I don't pick the music in the car. That's not a battle I'm going to have. I don't pick the movies we go watch. So on date night, we don't see Predator. I don't do that, because there are times when I'm going to have to make big decisions and she might be a little nervous about those decisions. I'm not going to choose those fights because there are other fights that I've got to have. So Lauren's call by God is in that moment when I'm gently and sacrificially trying to lead our family in a direction that she's not sure about, to submit to that. So that doesn't mean I strong-arm her. It doesn't mean that I say, "We're doing this no matter what you say." It means I do all I can to teach, to submit, to show and to encourage. I give her time. I don't go, "Hey, I'm thinking of taking the job at Highland Village First Baptist Church. I need to know what you think about that by Tuesday afternoon at 3:00." That's not how it goes. She's in the process from the beginning, and so you can see that I'm overlapping here because you've got to talk to the men also, because they have ultimate authority over the marriage on how to love their wives and enable their wives to actually do some of this.

So let me give you a couple more. The woman would love and submit to her man with a brotherly love. This is out of Titus 2. I was always confused by that text in Titus that tells the wife to love her husband with a brotherly love. Here's simply what that is. There should be friendship in the marriage. You should be good friends. I don't think there is anything sadder than a marriage to grow to the place where you are sharing a checkbook and a house and maybe a bed, but nothing else. It wasn't created or designed that way. It was designed for there to be heat. It was designed for there to be laughter and shared experiences. Some of you are going to have to really work to find those shared things. And sometimes it's going to be the man kind of submitting and going a route he wouldn't normally go, or a woman submitting and going a route they wouldn't normally go for there to be that brotherly love. So ladies, I'm not saying that you have to play paintball, I'm just saying you have to find something.

The woman should submit to the man by doing him good and never harming him, which means you've got to watch your mouth because nothing will wound a man more than your mouth. The Bible has literally said on multiple occasions that it's better for your husband to die in the desert or to live on the corner of the room than it is to live in the house with you and your wicked mouth. So just process that, God goes, "Sorry, bro, you want me to put you out in the desert where you can just die and let the vultures eat your body?"

So let's get to the men. "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them." The man should love the woman, because this is just any kind of love. The man should love the woman by sacrifice, by giving of himself says Ephesians 5. Let me put that more simply. We don't love to get a response. My problem with 99% of all marriage literature written for Christians is that it lacks the centrality of the cross of Christ and will ask you to exchange something for another thing, which is not foundation of Christian love. So you will read weird stuff in Christian manuals like, "Vacuum the floor and then you'll get more of this. Do the dishes and then you'll see more of that." So you vacuum the floor and nothing happens, and now you're angry because you've been taught that if you'll do these things, she'll do these things. No. We love because God's commanded us to love. We do not love to get a response. Some of you are going, "My wife is crazy." Well, she was crazy when you married her and you still married her, so you're in bro. So you love her in her craziness and what that will do is remove you from being something she can point to in order to justify her craziness. You just simply and patiently continue to love her and sacrifice for her. You love the woman by romancing her. You get this from the Song of Solomon. You have a Biblical obligation to romance your wife. Now, here's the good news because a not of men

are not wired that way. I completely get it. You're not prone to poetry or creative dates. That's why God gave you Google. I mean God gave you a straight up job. In generations past, I don't know if they were all that worried about romance, they were fighting off Indians and trying to get the crops in, but in your day, God gave you an iPhone or a Blackberry and Google. Just Google "romantic date" and some of you cheap fools, Google "cheap romantic date." It's not complex. It's not science. You don't have to be William Shakespeare. You've got a lot of tools at your disposal. Use them.

The man should love the woman in gentleness and humility. That's Ephesians 5. So in conflict, gentleness and humility. Enjoy gentleness and humility. In regards to sexuality, gentleness and humility. We are charged to a gentleness and humility in engaging the souls of our wives. 1 Corinthians 11 says that the man should love his wife by covering her and protecting her, providing for her and caring for her. So as the man, my role is to provide for and care for the soul as well as the physical needs of my wife. Now, not the physical wants, but physical needs. Those are very different things. Although, for the record, I usually over a period of time can get worn down on the wants, and give in, but that's my own weakness, God help me. In the end, this is the way the man is to love the woman. The woman is to submit to this kind of man, and if she doesn't have this kind of man, she is still to respectfully submit in the hopes that her beauty and diligence before the Lord will win him over to the Lord. Women, you are not the Holy Spirit. When you try to be the Holy Spirit, it just goes bad. So if your plan is to get in the car on the way home and go, "Did you hear what Pastor Chandler said?" That's not the way. I've never met a man who is going to get chewed out on the way home and go, "I will implement every bit of that as soon as we get home." You let the Holy Spirit be the Holy Spirit, and you be steadfast in prayer and submit and love your husband well. And then here is the deal. He is God's. God will discipline those He loves. He will scourge all those He's called sons. That's in Hebrews 12. You continually turn him over to the Lord, love him well, encourage him where you can encourage him, but you are not the Holy Spirit and you don't hold that kind of power. But God does. So that needs to be where you put your hope.

One last thing. He commands the man, "Do not be harsh." So once again, you don't be passive and you don't be aggressive. Pray a lot for your wife. You encourage your wife a lot, and you do not compare your strengths to her weaknesses. You encourage all that she does. You speak life into your wife. You are not harsh with her. The Bible will say that where you are harsh with your wife, you hinder your own prayers. You can treat your wife in such a way that God turns off your prayers. That is a terrifying idea.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. There are those who are in here this morning who have come in here this morning with difficult marriages. There are wives who, in the car on the way home, are going to need to ask for forgiveness and repent. There are husbands who are going to need to ask for forgiveness and repent. My hope across all three campuses, God, is that we might be a place that gets back to Genesis 1 and 2 in regards to our spouses. For those who are single, God, I pray that You would put a real desire in us to pursue and look for godliness. And I pray that even in dating, we might let our weaknesses be known and seen so that we're not building a relationship on lies. Help us where we've failed. Everyone in this room has failed, and yet we keep coming back to Your grace. Help us. We need You. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."