

## A Beautiful Design (Part 7) – Woman's Purpose

Matt Chandler – October 26, 2014

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A man teaching on the purpose of woman. What could go wrong? If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Turn to Genesis, chapter 2. True story. I was in California earlier this week doing some teaching, and then I flew back in. I only had Thursday in the office, so I came in on Thursday, and dudes were literally coming by my office just to make sure I was all right, asking, "Are you ready for this weekend?"

I'm like, "I'm not going into battle; I'm preaching the Bible. I think we'll be fine." One dude hugged me like it was the last time he was going to see me. I was like, "I'll be fine. We'll talk about it afterwards." If you're a guest with us this morning, we are on the back end of our series we've entitled *A Beautiful Design*. What we've been talking about is God's purpose and God's design in men and women and how we interact with one another.

Up until this point, we have almost exclusively talked about the *imago Dei* or us being made in the image of God, the difference between men and women and every other living thing in regard to us having an increased value above and over them, not to be cruel, but to steward appropriately for human flourishing.

Then we got into manhood. We talked about manhood right up until last week. The majority of the sermon was on manhood, as we read the very text we'll read today, in order to move us toward the purpose of the woman. We said this is the purpose of the man. This is what makes a man a man, because biology makes one a male but does not make one a man. Correct?

Biology means my 8-year-old son is male, but his biology does not dictate that he is a man. In fact, he's male but not man. I'll lay it down. I've watched him. He's not a man. He's a male. In the same way, biology makes my daughters female, but it does not make them women. So there's this other component, this other piece, that makes biological males men and biological females women.

We dove into that on the man, and here's what we said about the man. God's role for the man is something we defined as *headship*, and here's how we defined it. Male headship is the unique leadership of the man in the work of establishing order for human flourishing. We were unapologetic about that definition and have not backed down from it in any bit, because there's no way to argue in any domain against that sentence.

Whether you want to look at it sociologically or you want to look at it economically, no one could say with any intellectual credibility that the home is a better place when there aren't men there, that what's best for children is fatherless environments, what's best for daughters is a man not to be anywhere near them, what's best for women is for men to have no interest.

No one would argue that. You couldn't argue it sociologically. In fact, the numbers say the very opposite is true. Where men refuse to be men, things crumble. They fall apart. They turn to dust. You can look at it sociologically. You can look at it economically. You get into the poorest communities imaginable and here's what you'll find: fatherlessness, broken marriages, absentee dads.

Now with all of that said, I'll never say that sentence without following it up with this one: single moms, widows, where the ideal is lacking, grace always abounds. Don't lose heart. In fact, I've said, and I need to do it... I need to preach a sermon on how God responds to the prayers of mamas. All throughout the Bible, mamas cling to the feet of God and plead for the lives of their sons, plead for the lives of their daughters, and God responds.

Sometimes he takes quite a bit of time before he responds, but he responds. It's a beautiful reality that where the ideal is lacking, where maybe, God help you, you got involved with a boy who could shave, where you got caught up with a guy who looked like a man but ended up not being one, and now you have a child, God is going to enter that space and he's going to be merciful and gracious. So don't lose heart.

Now how is a man to exercise this headship, this unique responsibility to order things for human flourishing? Well, we saw from the Bible that he is to do this with sacrificial love. One of the first things we have to talk about when we're talking about masculinity is that men give and boys take. What marks my 8-year-old as a boy right now is he's still a taker. He's not a giver; he's a taker. "That's mine. What about me? How about mine?" That's taking. That's how little boys act; it's not how biblical godly men act.

Godly men are self-sacrificing for the good of the wife, for the good of the child, for the good of the church, for the good of the community. Self-sacrificing love is a mark of biblical masculinity, and it is the only way that true headship is ever exercised or practiced. Where men are takers and try to operate in headship, they tend to be oppressive. They tend to rule with an iron fist. They tend to be this false bravado, insecure masculinity that reeks of the stench of death. Men aren't takers; boys are. Men are givers. Self-sacrificing love marks the headship of men.

Men practice headship not just in sacrificial love, but also in setting up the spiritual climate of the home and the church. We create environments in which God and his Word are seen clearly, worshiped passionately, and where the understanding in our home is, "We serve the Lord." Again, you have to put these things together. It's not that he sets the climate with an iron fist. No, no. He sets the climate with sacrificial love.

Finally, the man exercises headship by providing physical care. I don't want to repeat old sermons, but that doesn't necessarily mean he's the primary breadwinner, but it does mean he's not lazy and his life is marked by hard work. There is no place in biblical masculinity for lazy men. In fact, I'll tell you that the lazy men I have come across are some of the most miserable and some of the most damaging human beings I've ever come across.

God has not designed the man to be bored. He has not designed the man to be lazy. Where a lazy, bored man is anywhere in sight, destruction and death are around him. So that's how we defined the role of man. Now we want to do the same thing out of the same text when we talk about women. Let's look at this together. Genesis, chapter 2, starting in verse 18.

**"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' 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."**

Three things stand out about this text in regard to ancient Near East manuscripts and thinking. (This isn't the sermon; this is all free.) The first thing that stands out in this, outside of it being scriptural and just looking at it as a historical document, is there's one Eve made. That sounds like a no-brainer to us, but in this day and age, this is a polygamist world where women are viewed as cattle, and the more women you have, the wealthier you are.

God goes, "No, no, no. All you need is Eve, Adam." He creates one woman. He pulls the woman from the man's side with the connotations of intimacy and closeness. In the narrative, he doesn't pull woman from the back, from the spine, from the behind. He pulls her from the rib. She will be intimate and close with the man.

The last thing is it would have been considered and *was* considered scandalous that a man would leave his family and hold fast to his wife. Until we get some of this, the wife had better come into the man's family. But God is going, "No, no, no. Time to leave Mama, bro." That's not how it reads in your text, but that's what's happening.

"Time to leave Mama. Now you have a wife. Yes, you're a part of this bigger family, but your loyalty, son, isn't to Mom and Dad anymore; your loyalties belong to your wife. You will leave mother and father and hold fast to your wife." Ladies, do not help me be the Holy Spirit right now. Don't help me. I don't need your help. Don't be hijacking my sermon.

Now with that said, what we saw concerning the man is that he was placed in the garden and commanded by God to work it and to keep it, and that's where we got our idea of headship. Those two phrases, *work it* and *keep it*, are what helped us define the man. Now what we were given phrase-wise concerning the purpose of woman is *this* phrase, and every word in the phrase matters. If you don't have all of the pieces, you think wrongly about what the purpose of woman is.

Here's the phrase (it's used twice in this text): *a helper fit for him*. We'll break up that phrase into two ideas: *a helper* and *fit for him*. Both of those are going to matter. This word *helper* is a difficult

word in the Hebrew because it's highly contextualized. The words around it are the only way to make sense of what it means.

Let me give you an English equivalent. The word *fast* in English is a difficult word. It can mean speed. It can mean abstaining from food. It can mean stubbornness in position. "He holds fast to his position." It can also mean a type of shady deal, fast business, fast dealings, a shady way of doing things. The only way to know what one is talking about is to take that word and put it in a sentence.

If I say, "Yesterday morning I was at my son's football game and there was a kid there who was fast," no one is going, "You mean he didn't eat any food while he was at the game?" No, you know exactly what I'm talking about, because the context dictates the word. If I said, "There's a young woman we're good friends with who is on a 20-day fast," you don't think she's doing wind sprints in the front yard. You know, "Oh, she's abstaining from food."

If I tell you about pastor friends of mine who hold fast to biblical truth, you don't think I'm talking about speed or shady deals. You know, because the other words around the word *fast* dictate the meaning of fast. This Hebrew word *ezer* is very similar. It's used throughout the Old Testament, and the context always matters. I'll say more about that soon.

Here's the big debate around this word *help*. The debate in light of this text is, "Do women have, as helpers, a subordinate role to the man's in human flourishing?" We know, and we've already covered, that women are equal in dignity, worth, and importance, so that's not the issue. We're not talking about whether women have to be subordinate to any and all men. We've already covered that. No, they do not.

The question and the debate around the word *help* is whether the woman holds a subordinate role to the man's in the task of human flourishing. There are a couple of things we have to consider so we define and understand this word correctly. First, when the word *ezer* in Hebrew is used, it is most often used for how God engages with man. The word *help, ezer*, is most often used in regard to God helping man. Let me give you a couple of these texts.

Exodus 18:4: "**...and the name of the other, Eliezer...**" Here's the meaning of his name. "**...(for he said, 'The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh').**" God is my helper. Deuteronomy 33:7: "**And this he said of Judah: 'Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him in to his people. With your hands contend for him, and be a help against his**

**adversaries."** So God is our helper. One more. Psalm 33:20: "**Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.**"

Here's what I would say. God being called *helper* throughout the Scriptures brings honor to the position of helper. Since God has been called the *helper*, a helper cannot be inherently inferior. So if woman has been made a helper fit for him, a woman as helper to the man cannot mean the woman is inferior in any way.

With that said, what does it mean to be a helper? Well, in every context in which *ezer* is used and even how we use the word *helper* to this day, *helper* denotes someone helping the one with primary responsibility. Are you tracking with me? To be a helper is to help someone who holds the primary responsibility.

If Josh Patterson comes to my office this week, knocks on the door, and says, "Chandler, can you help me with this?" he is not asking me to do *my* job; he is asking me to do something he has been tasked with that he is too weak to accomplish, so he is asking me to come help him. Strength isn't the question here. In fact, the one who's being helped is the weaker one who needs help in order to execute upon their primary responsibility.

So although to be a helper is not inherently inferior, it is to come alongside the one with the primary responsibility. To say that a woman who is helping is somehow inferior to the one with primary responsibility is to make the accusation that God is inferior for the help he gives his children. It's absurd. So she is a helper fit for him. Not a helper *like* him, but a helper *fit* for him.

This phrase, *fit for him*, leads us to the idea of complementarian relationship. The man and the woman were created unique by God, both in the image of God, equal in dignity, value, and worth, but they have been meant to complement one another, not compete against one another. The weaknesses of the one are strengthened by the strengths of the other, and the strengths of the other one are made even stronger by the strengths of the other.

There is a complementarian relationship, where men are being men and women are being women. If that happens, then you have the type of human flourishing the Bible commends, that if we'd be willing to walk into it, our joy might increase, God's glory might be seen all the more brightly, and all of our hearts would be satisfied in him. Where we buck against this system, bad things happen.

Let's talk about it. What we did with the man is we said, "Okay, let's look at this in the home, and let's look at this in the church." Ideas are ideas, but ideas take place on the ground. Ideas are great until you implement them. So let's implement these things. What would it be like for women to help the man in the home in regard to God's command on his life to order things so that humanity might flourish?

In Ephesians, chapter 5... That's not the one we're going to cover. I'm just mentioning this. We're going to go to Titus 2, because I want you to watch these things at work. But in Ephesians, chapter 5, there's this great passage about husbands and wives. Everybody when they talk about husbands and wives wants to start in Ephesians 5:20 that reads, "Wives, submit to your husbands." Yet if you roll it back to verse 15, you have this idea of mutual submission before "Wives, submit to your husbands."

You have this guideline for Christian behavior before you ever get to "Wives, submit to your husbands." What he means by mutual submission is what we've already covered, that men who are exercising headship must do so in a way that is marked by sacrificial love. We show deference. We include. We want to know. We desire interaction. We value the intellect of our wives. We value the gifts of our wives. We encourage and speak life into our wives. So we walk in mutual submission.

We don't come home and go, "This is what we're doing, woman." That's not how we work. That's not headship; that's bullying, and you won't get away with bullying God's daughters for long before he lights you up. Go ahead. You can rumble if you want. It's going to go badly. I'm not scary; I'm six-five and gangly. God is scary. What are you going to do? Cover up? What are you going to do against God when he starts throwing haymakers?

No, no, mutual submission. "What do you think? How do you think we should approach this? Here's what I think. Hey, on Thursday, what about this? What would you want to do with this money? Here's what I'm thinking." Then, after mutual submission, it goes, "Wives, submit to your husband," and then puts a ton of weight on the men, just a terrible couple of sentences. "Husbands, love your wives like Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Listen, fellows. It doesn't get harder than that.

I want us to look at complementarity in action, so Titus, chapter 2, starting in verse 2. Here's what it says. **"Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness."** Do you want a definition of mature godly masculinity? There it is. **"Older**

**women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home..."**

I don't think that means you can't work outside the home. We'll talk here in a second. "...**kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.**" On the list, that's the only one that overlaps. It's like men and women both need to chill a little bit. Be self-controlled, be self-controlled. Calm down. Breathe. Why are we yelling? Now let's finish this.

**"Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us."**

Let's look at this in regard to complementarianism. If you have men who are being trained in this, if you have older men who are training younger men to be this... "We're going to be self-controlled. We're not flying off the handle." Think of how much damage men who lack self-control do with their words, with their actions, with their size, with their intimidation.

What if they were self-controlled? What if they didn't fly off the handle? What if they weren't governed by their rage? What if they had been disciplined in the art of not losing control? What if they modeled good works? What if they spent their lives on serving the King and the kingdom? What if they walked in integrity and in dignity? What if they were sound in speech and used their mouth to build up rather than tear down?

Where you have a man functioning and growing in this... He's not going to be perfect. He'll be growing toward; he won't be completely in. We know this. That's why we need the gospel. That's why grace is so important. But he's growing in this. Where he stumbles and falls, he's quick to own it before God and before anyone he has harmed.

Then it gets into the list of women. Older women are training younger women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled and to be pure, to work at home. You can't, with the rest of the Bible, say women can't work outside the home. I know historically there have been some arguments around that.

What's happening here is the woman is very plugged into the discipleship process that's occurring at home. She is alongside her husband, setting the spiritual climate of the home, encouraging those things. "Hey, let's get in there. Daddy is going to open up the Word of God. Let's gather together." She's climbing in bed and cuddling also. I have three kids. If I had to cuddle with all three, I'd fall asleep in one of their beds and just sleep there for the night. I need somebody to help me. "Who do you want tonight? All right, I have this one. Who has two? Who has one?"

The last thing it says here to women is to be kind and submissive to their husbands. The amount of power God has given women, wives in particular, on the souls and hearts of their husbands is staggering. I learned a long time ago to develop very thick skin and that every time you preach the Bible, some people love it and a lot of people hate it. I learned in college to have thick skin.

I'm fully confident, because it has happened, that you could find me after the service and tell me how much I stink, drop some f-bombs on me, say you'll never be back, take a whiz out on the foyer, and just disappear, and here's what would happen after Security tased you and you got arrested for the urination deal. Yelling at me is just yelling at me. (Was that too far? Sometimes I feel like I shouldn't have said that. It's too late now. It's out.)

I really believe I would just feel bad for you. I wouldn't go, "Oh man, I stink. You know what? I should probably see if I could get into another career." I would wonder what type of father would you have that would make you behave in such a way with even those you disagree with. I would pray and ask the Lord to do a work in your soul and maybe heal whatever wound that is. I promise you I'd pray for you as I drifted off into a really sweet sleep tonight. I just would. I'm not trying to be funny. I know how this works. I know some of you even right now are starting to fume.

But my wife can destroy me. All that thick skin just vanishes with Lauren. She knows every weakness, every bent, every shortcoming, every inconsistency, everything, and so her words can brutalize my heart. Her words can keep me up at night going, "Oh my gosh, really?" So how is it that you can corner me, cuss me out, tell me I stink at everything and you can't wait for me to die, and I'm like, "All right, buddy; praying for you," and I can just go to bed, but Lauren can just hint at displeasure and I'm lying up at night just questioning everything?

Some of you might be thinking, "Bro, you need to develop thicker skin toward your wife," but no, I don't. Why would I ever sacrifice the emotional, spiritual intimacy I have with my wife for the fear

that she might wound me? Listen. She's going to wound me. She's a sinner. I'm going to wound her. I'm one. But you never sacrifice intimacy for protection, especially not in the covenant of marriage.

Now you can make some arguments of wisdom when you're dating or courting, but once you're married, don't protect yourself. You're going to get hurt, but you're going to get hurt within a covenant that says, "I'm not going anywhere." He says here, "Be kind to your husband." You can crush him. Don't do that. Be an expert in his strengths. Don't be an expert in his weaknesses. Where he's doing well, applaud him. Don't just know all of the ways he's falling short. He's aware of where he's falling short. He doesn't need your help. But that's getting into next week's sermon.

The Bible is saying where we're doing this, where men are pushing toward this and women are gladly underneath this, our opponents would have nothing to say and the enemies of the Word of God would have nothing to revile. I can tell you how I think about my home under the weight of the Word of God. If you come into my home, you're going to see my wife's face beaming. She knows I love her. She knows I'm for her. She knows I find her wildly attractive.

She's not wondering where my head is, not wondering where my affections are. She knows I am for her gifts being used. She knows my eyes are on her. I'm transfixed with her. I'm crazy about her. You want to know what type of woman I like? I like Lauren. "Do you like blondes or brunettes?" What has she done with her hair this month? *That*. That's what I like.

If your wife knows this, then any type of "You need to be liberated from the man" sounds ridiculous. If you come into my home, my wife is gladly flourishing in her gifts. She feels loved and romanced and cherished. All of that is work, fellows. That's not easy. That's planned. That's sit down and look at the calendar. That's little notifications and just text her something cute.

You can giggle at me, but I'm telling you, that type of discipline you take toward sports and following your favorite team, if you'd put that on your wife, she wouldn't think you're such a jack. Look at the ladies clapping. You're sitting next to him. You're not helping. If we live this way, what would the world have to say about us?

The idea I'm talking about here, strong husbands, submissive wives, is painted as this kind of archaic, broken, "How dare we think about women in that way?" I'm telling you the Bible says where this is lived out accurately the world has nothing to say. They could attack the idea, but if they ate dinner with you, they'd apologize. If they got anywhere near you, saw your children, saw

how you loved your wife, saw how you submitted to your husband, they'd go, "Gosh, that's what I really want."

Now if all you've ever been around is idiot men, I can see why this would unsettle you, but you can't take the lowest common denominator and make him normative. If I can take the lowest common denominator in regard to what I've come across in women and make her normative... I don't want to preach next week's sermon, but do you know the Bible says it's better for a man to die in the desert than to live in the house with a contemptuous woman? Think about that. God is going, "Dang, bro. It really would be best for you to wander into the desert and die than to live in this house."

So let's be careful not to make the lowest common denominator in regard to the men you've come across and know as somehow the average or the norm, and we'll agree not to take the lowest common denominator in regard to women and make *her* the norm. No, where this happens, flourishing occurs, and the world might attack the idea, but they'll only attack the idea because they haven't seen it practiced. To see it practiced is to have your mouth hushed. It's really kind of awesome.

That's complementarianism in the home. Now let's look at the church. What we see clearly in the New Testament is women as needed and necessary in the flourishing of the church body. In Acts 8:4, women are almost certainly included in the list of disciples who went everywhere preaching the gospel. Older women are to teach younger women. We see that in Titus 2. Priscilla helped her husband Aquila teach Apollos. That's Acts 18. Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied. Then women prayed and prophesied in the gathering at the church in Corinth.

Women are not only needed and necessary, but they are indispensable and essential in the life of the church. Now before we get deeply into this, let me chat to single women very quickly. If I'm saying here that the purpose of the woman is to be a helpmate or a helper fit for him and you're not married, how does this work? What does it mean to be a helpmate if you are single? Well, let me tell you what it *doesn't* mean.

It doesn't mean you're supposed to sit around and wait for a husband. In the Old Testament, the blessing was children. In the New Testament, the blessing was disciples. So don't sit around twiddling your thumbs, waiting for some man. Please don't do that. The kingdom of God is at hand, and you've been called to actively play a part. Why would you sit around wanting dinner and a movie when the great epic adventure in the universe is at play and you've been invited in?

Let me give you some examples. Here at Flower Mound right down the hallway in Kids Village is Anne Lincoln Holibaugh. I met Anne Lincoln when she was in college. We go way back. Anne Lincoln, every weekend, will run our ministry to first through fifth graders. There will be over 400 of them this weekend. There are 120 volunteers, there are 3 on her staff, and she is one of the most gifted theologians I've ever been around, a ferocious single woman of God.

When you dropped your first through fifth grader off in there... They're not learning moralism. Today they're learning that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help. What they're hearing today is, "God is your refuge. I don't know what is going on at home. I don't know what's going on physically. I don't know what's going on in school. I don't know if you're being bullied. I don't know if you're loved and cared for at home, but here's what you can know: God is your refuge. God is there for you. God has not abandoned you. God loves you."

Right now, led by Anne Lincoln Catherine Holibaugh, a 30-year-old single woman... She is actively making disciples out of our children. *My* children have grown under her care and under her leadership. Praise God she has not sat around and just waited for some dude to invite her to dinner. So don't do that, single ladies.

I can go on and on. We have Kourtney Nance up in Denton. If we got off of staff, we could talk about Tara-Leigh Cobble, another single woman. She runs a ministry called D-Groups. Over a thousand women have been discipled under her organization in 10 different states. And not emotive devotionals. Her group memorized Romans 8 this fall. They've been walking through a systematic book.

Listen. They have desires. They want to be married. That's a good, right desire, but they're not sitting around waiting for it. "Well, I guess I can't do anything until..." No, that's ridiculous. Don't do that. You have so much more value than that. Again, the blessing is disciples. I'm thinking in Dallas, Carly Pickens.

If you know anything of Champions of Hope, Champions of Hope was started by Carly Pickens, a young twenty-something single who had a real desperate heart to serve some of the poorest of the poor and began to mentor young men and women and then began to gather her friends and mentor young men and women.

That thing has turned into a monstrosity down in Dallas, where the poorest of the poor in the most difficult schools imaginable are being ministered to. It's flowing through their students and into their homes, and the church is being able to serve them, all because a single woman, who I assume (I've never had this conversation with Carly) would like to be married, has moved into a difficult part of Dallas and is, with a group of other faithful men and women, serving down there and making disciples.

What does it look like to be a helpmate if you're single? It means not waiting around for a husband. It means understanding that the kingdom of God is at hand. It means giving yourself over, having yourself wrung out, taking the hill. We don't know how many days we have, so we give ourselves over to training younger women, teaching and exercising our gifts in any and every way we possibly can made available to us.

The only caveat we ever see in the Bible around this is that women don't exercise their gifts in a way that emasculates men or usurps their authority. Run and teach and train and have yourself poured out for the glory of God and the good of the church. You're indispensable. We have to have you. Quit waiting around for some doofus to ask you out.

Here's one more note on single women. I found this response. I've gotten it twice now. I want to make sure I never get it again. I'm not trying to shame anybody if you're in here and you've said this to me. I feel like people get nervous talking to me now because I do things like this, but maybe that's a good thing. If you're a single woman in here and you're like, "Chandler, if I go strong like that, if I get deeper theologically, I'm nervous that young men would be intimidated and wouldn't approach me."

You do not want to make yourself dumber to get a man. I get it. I keep trying to save you from the ridiculousness of this age. You being dumber than you should be in order to attract an even dumber man... Seriously. I know we're giggling here. How does this in any way serve God or you, ultimately? Do you see how you're sowing seeds, even in that moment, of resentment and bitterness later?

Let me just share my heart for all women, married or single here at The Village Church. I don't desire, and the elders do not desire, that you would be the type of "pat your head, bless her heart, be quiet, ask when we get home" women. Grow in a knowledge of the Word of God. Strengthen your mind as much as possible. Do not be satisfied with emotive devotionals. Get in the deep end of the pool. Grow theologically. Grow in your gifting.

Practice and exercise your gifts to make disciples for the glory of God. Be the type of women who are iron that sharpen the iron of your husbands and male friends. And young men, don't be intimidated by women who are more theologically informed and educated than you are. They might just help your dumb self. You might just find, "Oh gosh, I'm uncomfortable here. Let me start reading more than I play my Xbox." I'm just saying it's helpful to have that kind of pressure on you. Her strengths should complement your weaknesses. Complementarian relationships.

Ladies, we want you to thrive. We want you to grow. We want you to utilize your gifts, and we want big minds and big hearts. I, Matt Chandler, lead pastor, one of the elders, am saying on behalf of the elders, "We need you." Make disciples. If you're a mom of three, four, or five (like I said, we're a happy campus), and you're going, "Man, how does this work? I'm so busy," well, listen. Primary discipleship responsibility is in the home, but that has not stopped my wife from dragging our kids all over the planet.

I love my wife Lauren. Don't do any fairy tale "Aw" right now. We fought big this weekend. Not last month we were in a fight. Like literally, Friday and Saturday the temperature in the Chandler house was a little hot. We had a flare-up. We had to handle it...godly-wise, but we had to handle it. So don't over-romanticize what I'm about to say.

I love my wife. Just a brilliant mind. She's smarter than me. Boom, down. I said it. She graduated in three and a half years, summa cum laude, no summer school. She decided on a trip to Mexico to CLEP out of Spanish and came back and did it. Who does that? Who is just like, "Well, I've watched Spanish TV for three days; I think I'll CLEP out of collegiate Spanish," and then comes back and does it? She just held the book for a second and somehow absorbed the information in it and then tested out.

She's brilliant, and not just book smart, but also street smart. She's not afraid of me. She will engage me often and respectfully around my errors. If I push too hard with one of the kids, if I've been irresponsible, if I've been quick to say something foolish, if I downshift into my critical spirit, she's quick to point me out. "You need to give them the benefit of the doubt." Always with respect, always with honor, but not afraid in any way of me.

I praise God she's that strong. If God would have given me some, "Bless your heart" or "I don't want to read; I just want to cook," I would be half the man I am. I'm telling you, I sit down with Lauren

and go over my weekend notes. "What do you think here? How does this hit? What do you think here?" "Oh, this sentence, I just think this would be better if... This isn't actually a word; don't say that out loud." There's a lot of that that goes on. "Are you sure you're pronouncing this right?"

In the community we live in, in the community our lives are playing out in, the number one felt need and the easiest breakdown to spot is the family. Adultery, divorce, broken homes, aggression... I'm telling you, we're living in Camelot. We all look pretty. We have our pretty cars. "How are you?" "I'm fine. How are you, brother?"

I have not the privilege but the heartache of watching you watch me, take notes, and raise your hand, while you're having an affair on your wife. I get to watch that every week. I get to watch you listen, take notes, raise your hands, clap your hands, knowing you're using your mouth to belittle, demean, and emasculate your husbands. I get to watch it week in and week out. It's heartbreaking. It's a near impossible weight sometimes. All I can do is preach and hope.

What would happen, though, in this community, if men stepped into this role and were serious about it? (I'm not trying to land the plane on this series. We still have several weeks.) What would happen if women stepped into this role and flourished? What a bright light would The Village Church be in this city if the marriages here were flourishing, if men were very, very serious about cultivating their wives so they look like what the Bible calls a well-watered vine?

What would happen in this place if women were experts in the strengths of their husbands so there would never be any word mentioned about their husband negatively, even in their own minds, because they were so aware of the good their husbands do? What kind of bright light would we be in this community? Well, I'll tell you what would happen. We would attract a lot of busted up marriages, as they flocked to the light in the hopes that the gospel would work in them.

Now all cards on the table always. Men, you *will* fail at this. The task is impossible. That's why you need grace. Women, you *will* fail at this. You have no real shot. This is why we need grace. This is why the cross is so spectacular. It's why we had better lean in. But the process that leads to human flourishing is the ongoing ethic of confession and repentance and getting up and continuing to pursue. That's what marks us. That's what moves us.

May we never believe we're there, but rather en route. Men are called to exercise biblical headship. It is the unique leadership of the man in the work of establishing order for human flourishing, and

women are called to walk in what is called being a biblical helpmate. That's a woman who serves God in helping the man in the work of establishing order for human flourishing, and I pray to this end we will labor. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for your grace and mercy. I pray that where we have fallen short of these things, you would encourage our hearts as men and as women. I pray even on drives home today we'd be quick to own our sin, quick to own where we have not done the things you have called us to, quick to lean into your grace and mercy and forgiveness. Help us. We need you. It's not a bad thing to fall short; it's a thing that sends us to you for mercy and help. Remind our hearts today. It's for your beautiful name, amen.

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