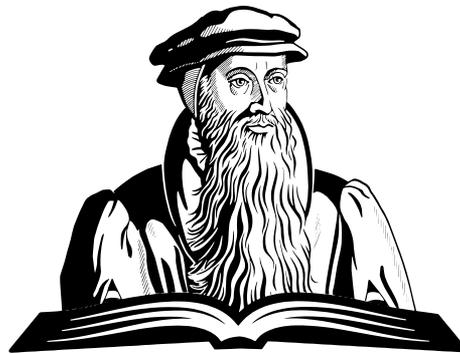

VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

8 LECTURES

Lecture Presenter: Robert D. McCurley M.Div.



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

John Knox Institute of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

© 2020 by John Knox Institute of Higher Education

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means for profit, except in brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship, without written permission from the publisher, John Knox Institute, P.O. Box 19398, Kalamazoo, MI 49019-19398, USA

Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

Visit our website: www.johnknoxinstitute.org

Rev. Robert McCurley is the minister of the Gospel at Greenville Presbyterian Church in Greenville, SC, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing).

www.freechurchcontinuing.org

Module

BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

8 LECTURES

ROBERT D. MCCURLEY M.DIV.

1. Priorities in a Christian Marriage 1
2. The Unity in Marriage 5
3. Headship 10
4. Servant and Shepherd 14
5. Godly Wives 1 19
6. Godly Wives 2 23
7. Communication 27
8. Finances and Physical Relationship 32

Lecture 1

PRIORITIES IN A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 1

What exactly is a biblical marriage, and how does it differ from other types of marriage? How does the Bible inform and govern a believer's relationship to their spouse? Does God provide us with a model to guide us? What does the Scripture teach about God's design for marriage and His priorities in marriage? What are the specific roles that the Lord assigns to husbands and to wives? How do we apply all the practical implications to the details of our daily lives? The purpose of this course is to study what the Bible teaches about marriage and to equip you with a deeper understanding of how to apply these truths. After laying the biblical groundwork, the scope of these lectures will be very practical, providing examples of how to implement biblical principles to the relationship of husband and wife. So, if you wish to understand better what God's Word teaches about marriage, these lectures aim to benefit you.

This first lecture introduces God's priorities for a biblical marriage. What makes a Christian marriage truly Christian? This may surprise you, but it is not simply a result of two professing Christians marrying each other. For a marriage to be truly Christian, first of all, it must be patterned after and governed by the Holy Scriptures. In other words, a Christian marriage must be a biblical marriage. Secondly, it must have the Lord Jesus Christ at the center of the marriage. He has first place in the relationship between husband and wife, and His presence alone provides the grace to glorify God. Thirdly, the gospel must shape and permeate the marriage relationship. Now that means that there is hope for those tempted with hopelessness.

For believers who are struggling in marriage, the Lord imparts hope for two reasons. First of all, God's Word is sufficient to address all our problems. In second Timothy 3:16-17 we read, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Secondly, there is hope because God's grace is sufficient for all our needs. Christ said to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The believer's greatest need stems from his or her sin, and God has made provision for sin in His grace. Romans 5:20 states, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." In the gospel, God's Spirit produces growth and change.

If you are married or if you are preparing for marriage, please recognize that this class is for you and not just for your spouse. In other words, profiting from this class is dependent upon being a doer of the word, and not a hearer only, as we read in James 1:22-25. You'll remember at the end of Christ's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus describes the difference between a house built on sand and a house built on rock; and He says that the storms come, the rains come down, the wind blows, and so on, and there's a difference between the two houses. The one that is built on sand collapses under the turbulence of the storm, whereas the house that's built on a rock stands firm and steadfast. Well, Christ went on to say in that passage, "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." It is easy to listen, to acknowledge truths, but then to go on without applying the truth and without implementing change. Consequently, I would strongly encourage you to go through these lectures with an open Bible.

The title of this course is Biblical Marriage, and I'll be directing your attention to many Scripture passages as we proceed through the lectures. But, you should also pray over the material, seeking the Lord to open your eyes and to search your hearts and to apply His truths by the Holy Spirit. If you are married, you would do well to go through your notes together, looking up the Scripture passages and discussing how they apply to your specific needs.

First of all, in this lecture, we're going to consider the foundation of biblical marriage. Marriage exists for the magnifying of God's glory. Now this is true of even the smallest details of life, as we read in 1 Corinthians 10:31, where the LORD reminds us that whether we eat or drink, whatsoever we do, all of it is to be done to God's glory. But how much more so is this true in marriage. In Ephesians 5:31-32, we read, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." In other words, biblical marriage sets before the whole world a model of Christ and the church, which displays the grace of God and defines marriage by the self-denying work of the cross.

Many themes, such as sin and grace, forgiveness, God's wrath, unity, and love are central to understanding biblical marriage; but marriage is also a temporary calling. Jesus tells us this in Matthew 22:30 when He says, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." So that means that marriage is one way to serve Christ and to exalt His praise, but it is not guaranteed in this life, whether due to sickness, death, or even celibacy, as we see in I Corinthians 7. Also, as with all God's gifts, we must always hold it loosely. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes; He both bestows and withholds according to His own will. Christ in the gospel of grace is the Christian's greatest gift. Having said that, marriage is a wonderful gift from the Lord. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled." We find similar things describing marriage as a gift in I Timothy 4:3 and in Proverbs 5:18-19.

As with all of God's gifts, marriage must not become a self-serving idol. Love for Christ must surpass love for any spouse. Jesus puts this very strongly in places like Luke 14:26 and Luke 18:29-30, as well as elsewhere. That leads us to the conclusion that you will love your spouse best by loving Christ most. Jeremiah 2:13 warns us, "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Whenever your spouse replaces Jesus, you forsake the fountain of living waters in exchange for a broken cistern. This can become a source of marital strife. Think of the practical implications.

When you put your spouse in the place of Christ and you expect them to supply what only the Lord can supply, then you will be hypersensitive to fluctuations of their love and become easily provoked when your spouse does not meet your expectations. If your endless supply of satisfying waters flows from Christ, then you will rejoice when Christ uses your spouse to express His love to you without putting your spouse in Christ's place. And when your spouse hurts or disappoints you, and Christ is the object of your joy, then your source of happiness will remain uninterrupted. As you can see, the condition of your marriage to Christ will directly influence the outworking of your marriage to your spouse. If your relationship with Christ is not strong, your marriage will not be strong. It is a beautiful Christ-magnifying display when both spouses are living faithful to their Lord. Even if your spouse is unwilling to pursue Christ to the same degree as yourself, you can live an abundantly blessed life full of love and joy and peace, and you can bring glory to God if your marriage to Christ is what is preeminent.

Secondly, we should consider God's design for marriage. God's primary design for marriage is companionship. We see that at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 2:18 where it says, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Likewise, for example, Malachi 2:14 describes a wife as "thy companion" and "the wife of thy youth." We see that same theme in a variety of different places within the Scriptures. So, whether a couple has children or not, they are able to fulfill this primary purpose of companionship.

But, the Bible also provides at least three secondary designs for marriage. That would include, first of all, procreation. Again, looking back to the beginning of the Scriptures, Genesis 1:28 says, "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." So procreation is also a purpose. Closely connected with that we have a second example, which would be the propagation of a covenant

seed in the church. Malachi 2:15 says, “And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.” A third example would be preventing lust and fornication. Paul addresses this in 1 Corinthians 7; he says in verse 2, “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” And again in verse 9, “But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.” All of this is summarized in [the] Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 24, paragraph 2, where we read, “Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife;” - so there is the picture of companionship, but then it goes on - “for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the church with [a] holy seed; and for [prevention] of uncleanness.” There [are] the three secondary purposes that we have outlined.

Thirdly, in this lecture, we need to consider the first priority of marriage, and this priority flows very much from the purpose that we found in the Scriptures. The first priority of marriage is unity, or you could say, oneness, or togetherness. We know that this is the case because it is true, first of all, of the supreme model of marriage, namely Christ and His bride, the Church. You look at the end of the Ephesians 5:30-32. In the covenant of grace, Christ comes with a marriage proposal through which believers are brought by saving faith into union with the Lord Jesus Christ. That saving union produces communion with God in time and eternity. So, we see in the supreme model of marriage that unity or oneness functions as the chief priority. Secondly, unity and oneness in marriage is specifically prescribed in Scripture. You think of 1 Peter 3:7, where it says, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel,” - listen to this phrase - “as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” Again, we see this described elsewhere, both in the Old and in the New Testament. Unity and oneness is also illustrated physically in the consummating act of marriage, and Jesus confirms this in referring to Genesis 2:24-25 when He says in Matthew 19:5-6 these words, “And said, for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Well, if this is the chief priority, how do believers, whether husbands or wives, cultivate this biblical unity? This becomes exceedingly important for us. How do we cultivate this unity? And the Bible teaches that there is a relationship between unity and trust and openness. So if you think about wholehearted trust, wholehearted trust is the foundation of unity in every relationship. For example, the believer’s relationship with Christ is built on trust or faith in Him. You see it illustrated in common Christian friendships. A good example would be David and Jonathan, which you can read about the beginning of 1 Samuel 18 and the beginning of 1 Samuel 19. But more to the point, trust is also central to unity in marriage itself. Proverbs 31:11 describes the godly wife, and it says, “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.” Trust is guarded in marriage by openness and honesty, so if both husband and wife are being frank and open and honest with one another, it will deepen and strengthen their trust of one another.

Loving your spouse is required of both husbands and wives. So if you look at the end of Ephesians 5, you’ll see three different times. Beginning at verse 25 and then 28 and 33, husbands are told explicitly to love their wives. Colossians 3:19 says the same thing. But it’s also true of wives. In Titus 2:4 we’re told that the older women “may teach the [younger] women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.” And so, this cultivation of unity is dependent on the pursuit of biblical love. Well, that means we need to define our terms. In considering the biblical definition of love, we learn, for example, that it does not assume evil, and it does not impute motives. I would encourage you to go back and read that well known chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, for some of the ways that God defines true love. If you assume anything, you’re to assume the best. Otherwise, you are to ask. Countless problems could be avoided by simply recognizing that you did not know what your spouse was thinking or feeling, despite your persuasion to the contrary. That is, you don’t think evil, and you don’t impute the motives that you think prompt them.

What else do we learn? We learn that love is not something that just spontaneously happens. Love is a commitment to give one’s life for another. Why are some people excited about the prospects of marriage? Is it so that they will be cherished or respected or have the exclusive affection and attention of someone? Or is it to give up their life in the service of someone else? Do we choose a spouse on the basis of who makes us feel good about

ourselves, or on the basis of godliness and a like-minded pursuit of God's glory together? Well, in considering love, you can contrast it with lust. Love and lust are opposites. Lust is consumed with getting, whereas love is a commitment to giving, sometimes irrespective of how we feel or our emotions. Lust says, "I want for myself." Love says, "I will sacrifice for my spouse." So to mortify lust, we must dethrone self; we're to find our joy in bringing joy to our spouse. This is what Christ calls us to. He calls us to self-denial.

Notice the relationship of love, for example, the relationship of love and giving in Scripture. If you go back to that passage in Ephesians 5, it says, 'Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for her.' Or think of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," or Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God," – listen – "who loved me, and gave himself for me." So love is defined by giving. We should make it a habit to be constantly looking to give of ourselves to one another. In the case of your spouse, you need to be thinking about giving your time and thought and serving and your ear, your speech, a willingness to convey what is on your mind to them.

There [are] all sorts of ways in which we can sacrifice and give to one another. Think of 1 Corinthians 13, because it also teaches that love does not seek one's own things in verse 5. We should not love in order to be loved back. Imagine the marriage where each spouse is devoted 100% to doing everything in their power to bring joy to the other and 0% to watching out for themselves. Well, that is the kind of self-denial to which God is calling you in marriage. Listen to how Paul describes Timothy in Philippians 2:20-21, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." If both spouses pursue this as a goal, it will result in rich edification.

But, this also is a majestic display of the glory of Christ and His gospel. Christ withheld nothing; He gave all for His bride. In Philippians 2:4-5 it says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Paul then goes on to describe Christ's condescension and His sacrifice. The church is called [upon, of course], to withhold nothing as well. The church is to give all in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ; we're to give all for our heavenly husband. 2 Corinthians 5:15 says, "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." If the essence of love is giving to others, then we need to learn how to express love effectively.

In other words, it is essential that you know how others like to receive love, not just how you enjoy expressing it most yourself. And, this is another form of self-denial and finding your joy by producing joy in the object of your love, in the case of marriage, your husband or your wife. This is also an aspect of knowing your spouse. In a future address or lecture, we will look at that more closely; the Bible calls husbands to know their wives and wives to know their husbands. And so we need to know, how is it that they appreciate receiving love? This is important because love can be expressed in thousands of ways, not all of which are equally meaningful to everyone. For example, it can include serving; so this [would be] physical acts of helping or doing projects or tasks or other things. That often is an expression of love meaningful to some. Another example would be physical contact: touch and holding hands and so on. Or, it could be giving gifts: generosity, surprising someone with a card or a note or something similar. Another way of expressing love is merely through verbal expression of appreciation: telling someone your admiration for them or expressing verbally your love for them. Another example is spending time together, and that may or may not involve speech, for example, or acts of service. It may be going places or just sitting together, and that time with one another means a great deal. Loyalty and faithfulness, of course, is another expression of love, and there are many, many, many others. The call to self-denial must move from a theoretical concept to a practical reality in the marriage relationship. It means thoughtful reflection. It means studying your spouse. It means purposefully pursuing ways in which you are giving of yourself to produce joy and edification in your husband or your wife.

Well, in conclusion, in this lecture we have established from Scripture the priority of unity in marriage. In the next lecture, we will explore what the Bible teaches about how to maintain this unity by resolving conflicts that arise from sin. In the lectures that follow, we will turn our attention to the specific roles and responsibilities that God has assigned to husbands and wives.

Lecture 2

THE UNITY IN MARRIAGE

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 2

If you were to visit a harbor at the sea, you could go down onto the docks and find ships and other large vessels tied there. If you were to look carefully, you would discover that the ships are anchored to the docks with large, carefully woven ropes. The fibers of the rope are tightly braided together in order to give them strength, but if you were to unravel the rope and tie a single cord to the ship, it would be weak. It would snap when the wind and waves began to pull the ship away from the dock. Biblical marriage is like a tightly woven cord. When a husband and wife are bound to Christ and then woven together in biblical unity, the marriage is strong. But when it begins to unravel, it becomes fragile and unable to withstand the pressures of life.

What threatens unity in marriage? How does disunity manifest itself? What does God tell us to watch against? How can we protect a godly marriage from these harmful influences? How do we restore unity when it has been undermined or weakened? And what bond has God specifically provided for the preservation of biblical marriage? In the first lecture, we established from Scripture that God defines unity as a top priority in a biblical marriage. In this lecture, we will explore how this unity can be maintained amid all of the hurdles and obstacles that threaten to disrupt oneness in marriage.

We'll consider three things: first of all, the threat of sin. Every marriage, even a biblical marriage, consists of two sinners, a sinful husband and a sinful wife. The believer's greatest struggle relates to his or her war against sin. Paul makes this clear in Romans 7:14 and following. This is true in life in general, so it should be no surprise to us that sin is the root cause of all the potential problems in marriage as well. The Bible says that offences will come whenever any two sinners are involved. James writes, "For in many things we offend all," chapter 3 verse 2. And he says in the next chapter, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"

Two of the major sins that threaten unity and the pursuit of love are selfishness, which basically says, "Me first", and pride, which says, "Me best." The believer cannot elevate himself and his desire without causing damage in his or her marriage. In addition, the root problem in taking offense at another's actions often stems from misplacing our ultimate source of joy. We desire to get what we want rather than finding joy in Christ Himself. We touched on this in the first lecture. Sin results in personal conflicts, including disruption in the marriage relationship. When those conflicts are not prevented, then they must be resolved. But before we address the resolution of conflicts, we need to remember that the motivation for biblically resolving conflicts cannot itself be self-serving. In other words, we may be motivated to resolve a conflict just because of our desire for personal peace, or perhaps to get something that we want. So we need to be on guard against that. We must do what is right for the right reasons, namely seeking God's glory and the good of our spouse.

That brings us to biblical conflict resolution. In the first lecture, we were focusing on how to cultivate unity. Now we're addressing how to repair unity when it has been broken, and that requires us to think specifically about how to resolve conflicts that arise within marriage. First of all, absolutely every single argument or disagreement must be biblically resolved to maintain oneness. The temptation is to sweep a matter under the rug, but that's never permitted. It is those kinds of unresolved, back-logged conflicts that build up over time and

destroy marriages. So rather than sweeping up a mess in a room and then disposing of it in the trash, if you're merely sweeping the trash under the rug, and you do it again the next day and the next day, eventually you're going to end up with a big mound or mountain under the rug. Many marriages face this similar problem where they've had months, perhaps years, of merely putting things under the carpet without ever biblically resolving the conflicts that have arisen.

Well, this requires several biblical commitments from every believer. If you're going to resolve conflicts biblically it entails, first of all, the need to tell your spouse what they have done before, during, and perhaps after an argument that was sinful or hurtful to you. This is what Jesus says in Matthew 18:15, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." So here is the principle of being open, cultivating trust by expressing frankly the things that a spouse has done that is sinful against us. But secondly, we have to admit to our spouse our own offense and our own sin, ideally even before they tell us, if possible. Think of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:23-24, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." So here, if we know that we have done something or said something sinful, we are to take the initiative in going to acknowledge that to our spouse. Well, both of these things require humility. In 1 Peter 5:5-6, we read, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." And so humility is required. Another thing that is required is self-denial. And we also need a greater commitment to a godly marriage than to our rights and feelings.

Well, all of this must always end not only with confession of sin, but also with granting biblical forgiveness to one another. If a spouse points out the fact that their husband or wife has sinned against them, or if a spouse takes the initiative and acknowledges that sin ahead of time, that's only the first step. There must be follow-through that leads to forgiveness. That means promising to bury the issue and to not bring up the forgiven sin to others. It also means not bringing up that sin to your spouse, or to rehearse the offence, even in your own head. The reason is because of how the Bible defines forgiveness.

Forgiveness, as we'll see, includes a commitment to forget. We are to forgive in the way that God forgives. Ephesians 4:32 says this, "forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." We forgive one another in the same manner that God forgives His people in Christ, and God forgives by forgetting, if you will. Now, God is omniscient; He knows all things, but you notice the language of Scripture. [In] many places throughout the prophets and the psalms, we are told that He casts the sins of the believer behind His back. Elsewhere, we are told that He casts their sins into the depths of the sea. We are told that He separates their sins from them as far as the east is from the west, and will remember them no more. Well, there are many other examples of that same concept. God is putting the sin out from the front of His face, as it were. He is not holding up that sin. He is burying the issue of sin, and this is what God calls upon His people to do in relationship to one another.

So in the context of a marriage where one spouse has sinned against another, perhaps both have sinned against each other, when there is an agreement to forgive, it's actually a promise to forget, a promise to bury the issue that has arisen. So if you think of the big picture and overview of dealing with a sinful offense, you have two parties. You have, on the one hand, the recipient of the offense, that is to say the person who has been sinned against, and as we saw in Matthew 18, there is a process to pursue: you are to go and tell your brother, your husband, your wife, how they have sinned against you. But the Bible also gives us the attitude in which to pursue that. Galatians 6:1 says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." So you have the person who has been sinned against. But then, on the other hand, you have the perpetrator of the offense; you have the one who is doing the sinning, who has sinned against the other, and we saw again the process to pursue in Matthew 5. If you are made conscious of the fact that your brother has ought against you, you are to leave your gift at the altar and go and be reconciled to your brother. But, the Bible also gives us the attitude in which to pursue that in 1 Peter 5:5, where we're told that there is to be humility, as we noted earlier, a humbling of ourselves in acknowledging our wrongdoing. And so, if you're thinking in terms of an overview, of the big picture, what should happen is when there is a conflict between a husband and a wife, and there's a separation of unity, both the person who has

sinned and the person who's been sinned against should be returning to one another and will, if you will, meet in the middle. They'll be found, as it were, coming back together to resolve this conflict that has arisen.

We should think of patterns of reconciliation that the Lord has given to us in the Scriptures. So first of all, if you can overlook an offense in love, then you should do so. Not everything that is offensive requires that it be addressed. So 1 Peter 4:8 reads, "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." What does that mean? It means that the more you love your spouse, the more easily you will be able to bear patiently with him or her. So there are many circumstances in situations where a passing and minor offence should just be covered in love. But secondly, if the offence is of such a nature that you cannot overlook it, so perhaps you've tried to, but you can't get it out of your mind and you're still emoting over it, well then you are to gently confront your spouse with his or her sin, as we saw in Matthew 18:15. Thirdly, the person being confronted should humbly receive the admonition, and if it is true, what's being said, then they should repent of it and be reconciled to their spouse.

Secondly, in this lecture, we need to think about serving Christ in unity as co-heirs; so that's a description of a godly husband and wife. In 1 Peter 3:7 we read that husbands and wives are "heirs together of the grace of life." Now what does that entail, serving Christ as co-heirs? Well, first of all, the husband must know and understand his wife. That same passage in 1 Peter 3:7 says, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel." A wise husband will learn to know his wife and to know her well enough to utilize her fully as a helpmeet, to be able to draw upon her counsel and her insight and her gifts and her abilities.

This entails knowing what it means for her to be a weaker vessel and caring for her accordingly. It means understanding her physical, emotional, and spiritual limitations and sensibilities. A godly husband will be devoted to giving honor to her, as we saw in 1 Peter 3:7 and as you see, for example, in Proverbs 31:28. This involves supporting and encouraging, even defending and praising her in front of others and privately. It includes a husband cherishing her by not doing what would be considered rude, which is an attribute of love as defined in 1 Corinthians 13:5. As you turn to the Old Testament, you discover that it is the husband's job to cheer up his wife, [Deuteronomy] 24:5, where the Lord says that a man in Old Testament Israel would, that first year of marriage, devote himself chiefly to cheering up his wife. That means concentrating on being sensitive to her many needs.

On the other hand, a wife must respect and honor her husband. That's repeated at least three times in Ephesians 5:22 and following. A wise helpmeet will strengthen and defend and assist her husband, even in his areas of weakness. You think of Abigail in the Old Testament in 1 Samuel 25. Abigail is an imperfect but nevertheless a good example in this regard. Prudence will crown a godly wife's decision making as Proverbs 19:14 says. She will also know and fulfill her husband's wishes as she is able. You note the example that is given from Peter in 1 Peter 3, and he highlights especially the example of Sarah in her relationship to Abraham. Likewise, Paul speaks to this in Titus 2:5. In addition, a virtuous wife is industrious and productive for her husband. The prime example of this would be found in Proverbs 31, and she will honor him by going to him for spiritual instruction, counsel, and help. In 1 Corinthians 14:35, Paul is telling the Corinthians that women are to be silent in the church, that if wives have questions, they should ask their husbands at home.

And so, as we'll note more in the next lecture, the husband is to be giving spiritual oversight and instruction to his wife, and the wife is to be seeking that out from him. A godly woman will honor her husband by assisting him in lovingly raising their children in the ways of the Lord. There are many examples in the Old Testament of this, as well as in the New Testament. She'll even be able to extend her family's ministry to teaching other ladies to do the same. In Titus 2, Paul instructs the older women to teach the younger women how to be godly wives and godly mothers.

Being co-heirs together of the grace of life means cultivating harmony. You can ask the question, what are our complementary strengths and weaknesses? Well, this requires some reflection. For example, spiritually, how do we complement one another in our strengths and weaknesses? What are your individual sins that you especially struggle with, or the graces that you especially shine with? What are the spiritual gifts that the Lord has given to you? And how do the differences between the husband and wife in these areas dovetail together? You can also think of complementary strengths and weaknesses emotionally; levels of emotion, frequency of various emotions. You can think of the same with regards to your physical condition, your health, your strength, your

energy levels, your ability to pursue various activities. There will be complementary strengths and weaknesses with regards to your interests, whether they be academic background and training, or your recreational interests, and so on. And you need to think of the relationship of gifts and abilities, or even the relationship that you have in terms of differences of personality bent, different temperaments. Some people are task-oriented; others are people-oriented, and there are many other features that belong to someone's personality. How do these two people work together in using their strengths in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ?

But thirdly, in this lecture, we should think of the bond of unity, and the biblical bond of unity is vows. God has provided the ordinance of vows for the preservation of the marriage relationship. A vow is a solemn promise in the presence of God, and it serves as an additional bond that ties the husband and wife together. This reflects the fact, vows reflect the fact, that marriage is a covenant relationship. The Bible uses the terminology, 'your wife by covenant' in Malachi 2:14. It is sinful, for example, for a believer to marry an unbeliever, to be unequally yoked to an unbeliever, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:14. Being unequally yoked is a biblical picture of being bound or tied to another by covenant. You can picture two livestock, and they have a yoke that goes over the neck of both of them, and they pull in the harness and in that yoke, perhaps a cart or a plow or something. This is a biblical picture of being tied to another by covenant. The description of marriage in the beginning of the Bible was "cleaving and becoming one flesh," Genesis 2:24. Now, if God converts a spouse after they are married and they find themselves in that circumstance married to an unbeliever, well, then they are to seek as best as they are able to continue in that relationship, which Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 7. All of this is backed by the fact that God is ultimately the One who is joining a husband and a wife together in marriage. The Lord says, 'What God hath joined together, let no man separate,' in Matthew 19:6.

Well, since vows are an important part of the unity that God has established for a marriage relationship, we need to ask a couple of questions. First of all, who is involved in the taking of vows? And, this is important because your marriage vows are first and foremost to God Himself. Deuteronomy 23:21 says, "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee." But secondly, of course, your vow is also a pledge to another. This is why a husband can refer to his wife as a wife by covenant (Malachi 2). Those attending a wedding, for example, are responsible to serve as witnesses to the vows that take place. By their attendance at a wedding, they're actually committing themselves to both witness and to hold you to your promises. Now there are many examples in the Old Testament of this. You think of Joshua 24:22, where Joshua calls for witnesses to the vows that Israel was making before God. Well, this underlines the fact that taking vows is a serious matter.

I would encourage you to look at the opening of Ecclesiastes 5. We learn several things; we learn, first of all, that you are not to take vows quickly or hastily. Ecclesiastes 5:2 says, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." Verse 2 of that same chapter reinforces the fact that you are not to take them thoughtlessly. You are to be reflective; you are to be conscious about what it is that you are saying in your vows. And once a lawful vow is taken, there is no return, no matter how much you regret it. If you look at verse 4 of Ecclesiastes 5, you'll see that. We also sing about this in the Psalms. Think of Psalm 76:11, or Psalm 15 and the end of verse 4, where it's saying that a godly man will swear to his own hurt and still keep his word. Well, that means it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Again, Ecclesiastes 5:5, "Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay." Do you see the merciful provision that God has given to marriage in the ordinance of marriage vows? This is an additional bond, if you will, that ties a husband and wife together in the presence and fear of God. It is a tool for the preservation of that relationship.

God not only prescribes unity for a biblical marriage, but He also provides all the instructions we need for preserving that unity. Sin, as we have seen, threatens disruption. But the gospel of grace teaches us repentance and forgiveness in Christ Jesus. I would encourage you to go over your notes and look up the passages of Scripture that we've referred to with your spouse. Discuss particular instances in your relationship where these principles should have been applied and other instances in which they perhaps successfully were implemented. Identify the specific areas which need to be changed. Formulate a concrete plan of how you are going to apply these biblical principles to the specifics of your own situation. For example, if there is a backlog of conflicts which have not been biblically resolved from the past, then you need to start by addressing those. And, of course, you

should water all of your study and all of your discussions with much prayer. We know that, “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it,” Psalm 127:1. In the next lecture, we will turn our attention to what the Bible teaches about the role and responsibilities of a biblical husband.

Lecture 3

HEADSHIP

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 3

When you travel in a bus or a car, the person in the driver's seat controls the steering wheel, the gas pedal, the brake pedal, and so forth. While the driver cannot control what those inside the vehicle are thinking or saying, he does determine the direction, route, and speed at which everyone in the vehicle is traveling. This illustrates the role of the husband within a biblical marriage and family. The husband sets the spiritual direction of his family. The Lord, of course, provides the map in the Scriptures, but the husband follows these clear instructions in steering his family in the ways of the Lord. In other words, as the husband goes, so the family goes. The exercise of godly leadership shapes the spiritual direction of the home. And just as the husband spiritually guides his home, the wife often contributes to the atmosphere inside the home, but we will consider her role and responsibility in future lectures.

What does it mean for a husband to be the head of his wife? How does this relate to the relationship between Christ and the Church? Why does God tell husbands to love their wives, and what does this look like in practice? In this lecture, we will study what the Bible teaches us about the place that God has assigned to husbands in a biblical marriage. We will consider the husband's position and his chief pursuits. In the next lecture, we will explore his exercise of godly leadership. But, let me also say a word to wives at the beginning of this lecture. In case you are tempted to use this material for berating your husband, please remember the words of 1 Peter 3:1 and following, and also remember that in a future lecture, the tables will be turned in addressing wives.

And so first of all, we need to consider the husband's position; and, in a word, that position is one of headship. The Bible says that the husband is head of his wife. This headship is another reflection of Christ's relationship to His bride, the Church. Ephesians 5:23 says, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." The Church is presented as the bride of Christ in both the New Testament and throughout the Old Testament. Think, for example, of the prophet Isaiah or Ezekiel or Hosea, or think of the book of the Song of Solomon, and so many different passages throughout the Psalms. The idea of headship fits within the gospel as a marriage covenant.

Furthermore, this headship is inescapable. Well, what do we mean by that? We mean that the husband's headship is a matter of fact. It is not a command. So you think of the words, again, in Ephesians 5:23. Paul does not say, "Husbands, go be head of your wife," or, "You should be head of your wife." Rather, he says, 'Husbands, you are head of your wife.' The husband cannot cease being head, though in his sin he can at times serve as a dysfunctional head. But regardless, you are always saying something through your life and through your relationship as a husband. You're either saying something truthful or something erroneous about the gospel and the relationship of Christ and the Church.

As head, the husband is a representative of God in the home. Thus, he should accurately model the character of God to his wife and his family. They should be able to see in their husbands something about the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They should be able to trace, as it were, the outline of who Christ is. A husband's first relationship is to his own head, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's right; the husband also has a head. In 1 Corinthians 11:3 we read, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man." So if

the husband's relationship with Christ is not flourishing, then the husband's relationship with his wife will suffer. His relationship to his head, Christ, directly influences his relationship to his wife.

The husband is also the overseer, or the governor, the ruler of his home. Now, some today insist that male headship was a result of the fall in Genesis 3; that prior to the fall, headship, male headship, did not exist, but that it came as a consequence of it. Well, this contradicts the Bible. This position of headship was actually given to the husband prior to the fall, not as a result of the fall. And you see this when you open your Bibles and look at Genesis 2; note verse 18 and verse 22 and verse 23. And, notice that when you turn to the New Testament that Paul appeals to that creation account in Genesis 2 when he is speaking about the role of women, for example, in 1 Timothy 2:11 and following, and again in 1 Corinthians 11.

This headship is a divine calling. This is a calling and a responsibility of a husband, but he is not more inherently deserving of this position than the wife. Only God has ultimate authority, so all human authority in this world is derived from Him, and He establishes the pattern and He establishes the parameters for the exercise of that authority. But it is a position assigned by God, and therefore it must be upheld. So, headship is not a right. It's not a right, for example, to abusive control or, on the other hand, to gross neglect. In fact, it's not a right at all but rather a responsibility. It is the responsibility to love, lead, protect, and serve one's wife like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of a parallel example. A pastor or an elder within the church is likewise given a calling and a role to fulfill before God, and that role includes authority and responsibility. But, he is not inherently more deserving, for example, of the respect or of the obedience that the people in the congregation must give. He's not more inherently deserving of that than those he serves. Yes, it's true that in Hebrews 13:17, the Lord's people are told to obey and to submit to those who have rule over them, to the elders. But it is only God's calling and the position He assigns that determines such a response by the people of respect and obedience. This has practical implications.

Think of the difference in our perspective when a wife fails to respect the husband's authority. So if you're a husband, think about that. Do you take legitimate offense for Christ and the shame that has brought to Him? Or, do you take offense, whether in part or in whole, for yourselves? The objection, "How dare you," can be motivated by self-centeredness or by having our pride wounded. Is venting our anger an expression of insecurity or an insistence that we deserve better treatment? Or is the disturbance in our spirit driven by zeal for the glory of Christ, which in this case is being undermined by the wife? You see, God assigns different roles to different people, and we all must learn to abide in the calling that God has given to us. Paul was addressing marriage and singleness when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:20, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."

That brings us secondly to the husband's pursuit; and here, the whole framework for his pursuit is defined in terms of love. God's main exhortation to the husband is to love his wife. So, go back to that passage in Ephesians 5. Notice how it's repeated three times. In verse 25 and verse 28 and verse 33, husbands are told to love their wives, and the same can be found in the parallel passage in Colossians 3:19. Men can sometimes be motivated by a challenge. It can be tempting to pour everything into successfully securing a wife before you're married, then after marriage to redirect your interests and energies into the next challenge. But, God calls husbands to pursue their wives all their days. We are to have an abiding love. It can be tempting to be sinfully independent to the neglect of the marriage relationship.

Husbands can easily busy themselves with other goals and not feel the need to cultivate a close relationship with their wife. But if they're to reflect Christ and His relationship to the church, then they must pursue constant union and communion with their wife. Think of how this is brought out in John 15:1 and following and consider the description of the husband's love in Ephesians 5. We're told that love is giving: "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." We're told that that love entails sacrificing one's own body, in verse 28, and caring for another as for oneself, in verse 33. This is a call to perpetual pursuit. The husband should no sooner neglect his wife than his own body. He does not give to his body sporadically or hate his own flesh; and so with his wife, this is a call to daily self-denial. Again, you can look at this definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

If you turn your attention to Colossians 3:19, Paul warns husbands not to be bitter toward their wives. This is a pointed temptation aimed at undermining love. Think again of Christ and compare, for example, His response to Adam and Adam's response in the garden of Eden. Christ never complains to the Father using language like, "This woman that thou gavest me." That was the response of Adam. Nor does the Lord Jesus Christ wish that He

were with someone else. Bitterness is, among other things, a refusal to forgive, and forgiveness is part of love. Indeed, when you again think of the gospel, the great work of grace that God brings in the life of a sinner, one of the wonderful manifestations of His saving love is in the forgiveness of sins, in the pardon that He provides for His people. Christ's love is manifest in repeatedly forgiving and in bearing with His people in patience and in longsuffering. As the husband reflects affectionately upon all that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for poor and needy but redeemed sinners, he is given tremendous [contentment] and help in knowing how to tangibly love his wife by being quick to forgive and by being patient and longsuffering.

The husband is to love his wife even as Christ loves the Church; that's the language of Ephesians 5:25. So the question comes, how exactly does this look? Well, that requires us to first understand what Scripture teaches about Christ's love. If the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, how did Christ love the Church? Well, we're told that He set His love on His people. Think, for example, of Deuteronomy 7:7, when the Lord Jehovah is saying, "I chose to love you out of my own good pleasure." This is a commitment to choose to love, not just an emotion or the idea of falling in love. Christ is the supreme model of loving even the unlovable. In Romans 5:8 we read, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In that same context, He describes His people and His love for His people in verse 6 as those who are "ungodly," and in verse 10 as those who were "enemies." Jesus wasn't loving someone that was lovable, but rather His love is magnified in His willingness to show love even amidst all of the failings of His people.

As Christ cherishes His bride, so the husband [is called to cherish] his wife. Look at that passage in the prophet Zephaniah 3:17 where the Lord is described as rejoicing over His people with joy, rejoicing over them with singing, and so on. Well, this entails devoting time and our full attention to our wives. The language within the psalms is full of this, of the attentiveness that the Lord has toward His people in times of woe and difficulty and trial and sorrow as well as in times of triumph. His eye is constantly upon His people; indeed, His people are called "the apple of His eye."

Christ's love even makes His bride beautiful. Go back once again to Ephesians 5. Speaking of Christ, it says, "That he might present it," that is, the Church, "to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." That's the language of Scripture. The husband's love produces loveliness in their wives. We are to draw out loveliness and to cultivate greater spiritual beauty in her.

Furthermore, the husband is to praise his wife. This, of course, is a means of encouraging her and of building her up and of strengthening her, but it's also a means of giving glory to God. So in Proverbs 31:28, we're told that the husband will praise her, rise up and call her blessed. And, you think of all of the ways in which the Lord praises His bride. We sing about it in Psalm 45, in the latter part of that psalm where you have this beautiful description of how the Lord thinks of and speaks of His bride, the Church.

A husband is also to support his wife. This is another way of tangibly loving her. He, as the stronger vessel, should not burden her with things as the weaker vessel. It is sometimes, perhaps, tempting for husbands not to be tender and compassionate, and yet Christ is our ultimate example. He looked upon the multitudes with compassion, not with irritation, and not with condescension, but nine times in the gospels we're told that the Lord looked upon the multitudes with compassion. You think of how this works its way out in other aspects of the family. Notice that Paul says to fathers - different relationship but a similar principle - Paul says to the fathers, "Provoke not your children, but bring them up in the nurture of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Well, there's a similar picture here of husbands nurturing their wives in the things of the Lord. Christ, of course, is perfect. Unlike every human husband, He is perfect and He is never at blame for anything. And so, the fault in that heavenly marriage relationship has to always be on the side of the Church. Yet, unlike Adam, Christ does not take up an accusatory posture toward His bride.

Loving your wife also involves being a lifetime student of her. In 1 Peter 3:7, it says that the husband is to "dwell with them," the wives, "according to knowledge." Husbands need to grow in understanding of both their wives' verbal and nonverbal communication. Husbands, that means you need to watch and listen closely, but not to assume that you understand or know everything that is going on in her heart or mind. If in doubt, you are to ask. It takes skill to draw out of our wives the things that perhaps they don't even see themselves in an effort to serve and encourage and help them.

Let me provide a handful of examples of areas that you can explore and discuss with your wife in order to better understand her. You can talk to her about biblical doctrine. What does she know, what is she clear on, with regards to the doctrine of Scripture? Where is she perhaps weak and lacking and needing further instruction? You can of course talk to her about the home, all of the goals and responsibilities and various challenges that are being faced in the home. If you have children, it is important to talk to her about the children, how they're doing, how they're relating to her, how they relate to one another, you know, their areas of strength and weakness, what their needs are. You can talk to your wife about her responsibilities, the responsibilities that God has given to her. Or, talk to her about her own family, her extended family, or her friends. Talk to her about her areas of Christian service within the church, or her goals, her hopes, her dreams. You can talk to her about the way that you could be a better father and a husband, or what you could do that would be even more edifying. You certainly need to talk to her about her struggles and her feelings with regards to many matters. Well, even if you limit yourself to this brief list, it could provide hours of edifying discussion. But, the point is clear: husbands love their wives by pursuing a greater and deeper understanding and knowledge of who they are, both spiritually and physically, with regards to relationships and everything else. A husband's pursuit is to love, and that is a perpetual call. He is to pursue, pursue, pursue, pursue his wife in love all his days.

Well, in this lecture, we have considered the husband's role as head of his wife and his primary call to pursue his wife in love. In the next lecture, we will turn our attention to the husband's practice of godly leadership within a biblical marriage.

Lecture 4

SERVANT AND SHEPHERD

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 4

Think of the important relationship between a faithful shepherd and his flock of sheep. He is responsible for leading them to lush pastures for feeding and to water sources to satisfy their thirst. He guides them to shelter when a big storm comes. He protects and defends them against predators that would harm or kill them. His leading, protection, and provision are indispensable to the sheep. What would happen to a flock of sheep without a faithful shepherd? They would be scattered and left vulnerable to many dangers. Well, husbands also serve as spiritual shepherds to their wives, and for the same purpose, the purpose of leading, guiding, protecting, and providing for them. And in doing so, husbands model the Lord Jesus Christ, who serves as the Good Shepherd of His people, as we sing in Psalm 23. As we noted in the previous lecture, the exercise of godly leadership shapes the spiritual direction of the home. In other words, his role is indispensable to the well-being of his wife and family.

So what does biblical leadership include? How does being a servant relate to being a leader? More specifically, how does a godly husband spiritually shepherd his wife and family? And what does this look like in practice? In this lecture, we will study what the Bible teaches us about the exercise of the godly husband's leadership in the home. We will consider the husband's role as servant and shepherd, and his responsibility to conduct family worship.

So the husband's role is one of leadership. We must, first of all, consider the potential obstacles that men face which sometimes prevent their exercise of leadership in the home. For example, one obstacle would be fear and insecurity. After all, leadership is vulnerable, and it can also foster a fear of failure at times. But as you probably know, courage is not the absence of fear; courage is doing our duty despite our fears, even when we are fearful. And the remedy for fear is love. 1 John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." You'll find a similar idea in 2 Timothy 1:7. So love is an important part of dealing with and addressing fear. Love for Christ and the desire to please Him will fuel, of course, love for your wife, and that growing love for your wife will help in overcoming fear. Wives can assist here, of course, by enabling the heart of their husbands to safely trust in them, as Proverbs 31:11-12 teach us.

Well, another obstacle to the exercise of godly leadership is laziness. Now, the book of Proverbs has a great deal to say about the [slothful] and about slothfulness, and it's important for us to make some distinctions here because we can often think of laziness as doing nothing. But, laziness can actually masquerade in busyness, and busyness is not the same as diligence. The question is, in all that you're doing, are you motivated by what is right or by what is fun? In other words, are you being driven by what is principled or being led away by what is pleasurable? Laziness does not follow through on the principled responsibilities that have been assigned to us. So, there may be a flurry of activity, but it's not the activity that God has actually called us to give our attention to. And, in addition to not following through on these responsibilities, laziness will also be full of excuses; notice Proverbs 22:13. Being a leader, of course, is hard work, it doesn't matter what the capacity is, and so any temptation toward slothfulness will end up producing a significant hurdle that has to be addressed.

A third area or obstacle would be selfishness and pride. Christ's leadership is seen in His initiative to save His bride. In other words, His focus and His pursuit were on bringing blessing to His bride. So the husband is to

use his strength and his resources to provide physically and spiritually for those entrusted to his care. And this is not self-centered; this is other-centered. Our leadership position is, after all, not for ourselves, but rather for the benefit of those who are being led by us.

Fourthly and lastly in terms of obstacles or hurdles that men will sometimes face, the last one would be discouragement. What happens when a person becomes discouraged? Well, they lose motivation and they lose energy and they're tempted to neglect the things that are in front of them. Well, Galatians 6:9 says, "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." You understand the picture there taken from farmers; if they do not sow in the spring, then when fall comes they will not have anything to reap, and so they have to carry on in the work of sowing. So it is for the husbands. There needs to be an ability to step back and to have the big picture, to realize, though there may be struggles and difficulties at various points that could lead to discouragement, that nevertheless, we're to continue in that well-doing; we're to continue sowing in love and in service, knowing that the Lord will bring a harvest out of it for His glory.

Another aspect of this leadership is the husband's call to be the chief servant of his home. Now these two things are often set as opposites to one another. Leadership is one thing; [servanthood] is another thing, and many people think that they are incompatible, but we know that they're not incompatible because we can look at the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And what do we find? We find that Christ, who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the great and most glorious leader, we find Him serving His bride, serving His church. And, a beautiful example of this is in the Gospel of John chapter 13, if you'll look at verse 4 and following. Here is the Lord of the disciples, and He takes up the basin and the towel, He sits His disciples down, and He goes down the line, one after another, washing their feet. And as you probably know, if you know your Bible and the history that is related to it, washing a person's feet in ancient times was one of the most demeaning things a person could be called to do. In fact, they didn't even make their slaves wash the feet of another person. And yet, here is the Lord Jesus Christ taking up the basin and the towel. The Lord is serving His people or His bride. And at the end of that, Jesus tells them, 'I'm your Lord, and yet I've done these things so you should go and do likewise.' As we bring all of that to the home, we discover that the role of the husband as a leader is actually a call to servanthood.

Authority is given by God as a position of protection and servanthood. You can think of parallel examples regarding other authority structures in Scripture. The first would be the civil magistrate. The civil magistrate is to be the servant of the people, not the savior of the citizenship. The language of Romans 13 is that he is a servant, a "minister" or a servant. He's not called to be the one who uses his authority in order to gather power to himself, or prestige to himself, or to position himself in order to gain something. He's not given his position in order to fleece the people and to take what is theirs for his own benefit. But rather, his position is one of serving for the benefit of those he is called to care for.

Another example would be the elders of the church. They're called to serve the members of the congregation, not to lord over the people. That's the language the Bible uses in 1 Peter 5:3 when Peter is speaking to the elders. He says, "neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." And if you turn to that passage in Hebrews 13:17, it is discussing the responsibility of the members of the Church to obey and submit to their elders. But it tells us the whole purpose of this. We're told in that same verse that the elders' responsibility is to watch out for the souls of the people, as those who must give an account to God for them. In other words, the whole purpose of the eldership is for the benefit of the people. And so, the author to the Hebrews makes the point, it is to your detriment if you're not bringing joy to those who are called to serve to your benefit. Well, those are parallel examples, but coming back to the family, the husband is to serve his wife and family. He's also given a position of leadership for the benefit of those that he's called to care for. Go back to Ephesians 5 and note the language of verse 25 and verse 28.

So the difference between biblical authority and what we might call authoritarianism is [contained in] several things. So, biblical authority on one hand and then an unbiblical use of authority or authoritarianism. These two things can be distinguished. Authoritarianism is first of all self-serving rather than focused on those who are under them. And, this can be seen in various places; you think of Matthew 20:25 and following. Another characteristic of an unbiblical use of authority or authoritarianism is that it reaches beyond the parameters prescribed for it in the Scriptures. So a person in authority begins taking responsibilities that God never gave to them. Well, that's an abuse of authority. So there are distinctions that have to be made. The husband, after all, is himself a

man under authority. He is under God's authority, so he is not free to do what he wants or to think how he would like or to pursue the things that are in his best interests. He is a servant under the Lord. And he is therefore to carry out his Master's will and wishes in caring for his wife.

As servant, the husband is the manager of his home or a steward of his home. Leadership means that he bears the ultimate responsibility for everything in his home. Notice God's words when He first comes to Adam and Eve in the garden. What does He do? He immediately goes to Adam, and He says in Genesis 3:9, "Where art thou?", and addresses him. Why? Because Adam was the head, and Adam was responsible, ultimately, for what had taken place. So, with rule comes responsibility. Any activity that takes place in a man's home is ultimately his responsibility. Many people will take that passage from Joshua 24:14-15 and write it out and perhaps hang it up on a wall or something, but you think back to those words, 'As for me and my house, we shall serve the LORD.' How could Joshua say that? Joshua is not just speaking for himself as an individual, but he is saying, as one who is responsible, he's saying, "Both [I] and my whole house [are] going to serve the Lord. I'm going to ensure that that's the case." Well, that means all final decisions in the home are ultimately the husband's responsibility. And whereas he may gain counsel and input from other parties, he ultimately has to take the responsibility for those decisions. And, those decisions are to be made in light of God's own will, as it is found in His Word, striving for the household to serve the Lord.

Thirdly, this leadership also works its way out in terms of spiritual shepherding. Husbands are not only servants; they're also spiritual shepherds. A husband is to shepherd his wife. This brings us back to where we started at the beginning of this lecture. But what does this entail? What does it look like for a husband to be the spiritual shepherd of his wife? Well, he is to be a teacher and a spiritual mentor of his wife. Remember the words in 1 Corinthians 14 where wives are to ask their husbands at home about things that they don't understand? Well, what does that mean? It means the husband himself must be a diligent student of God's Word in order to instruct his wife. It doesn't mean that the husband knows everything, but rather that he too has to be learning; and that may take place through his study of the Bible, through reading good literature, through talking to his pastor and asking him questions, but all of that furnishes him with material with which he can instruct his wife. Think of 2 Timothy 2:15. Well, this only comes with time and effort. It's not something that will just happen automatically, and if it requires time and effort for you as a husband to be a student, where is that time going to come from? It means that you have to devote less time to other things, perhaps your hobbies, and more time to things like study, reading theology, and studying the Scriptures, and listening to sermons, and so on.

The husband is obligated to know his wife intimately. Well, that includes knowing his wife's spiritual struggles. It means knowing her besetting sins, or the sins that give her the most trouble, or the ones that she struggles with and is most vulnerable to. It means that he has to know how she's developing in terms of her understanding of the gospel or her growth in Christian maturity. It means that he needs to know the other weaknesses that she's facing as well. How can he shepherd his wife unless he first knows her? Think back to that image of the shepherd and the sheep. The shepherd has to know what the sheep needs. Is it needing water? Is it needing more grass to eat? He needs to know, perhaps, its weaknesses; it tends to be skittish and run off in certain circumstances. He'll study and know each of the sheep and what their strengths and weaknesses are.

This is reflected in the ministry that a husband has to his wife. It means being proactive and taking the initiative to discover these things. What are her strongest graces? What sins plague her most? What areas of spiritual growth is she addressing at present? Are you ensuring that she has adequate time for communion with the Lord Jesus Christ? Maybe she has many responsibilities and she's pulled in many different directions. Think of the account given to us in Luke 10:38-42. You'll remember, Jesus comes to the home of Mary and Martha, and Martha is busy with many things. And that wasn't entirely wrong. She had many responsibilities. Mary is found at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, and when there is a little bit of an objection that comes from Martha, the Lord tells her that Mary is remembering the one thing needful. Husbands need to care for and shepherd their wives by ensuring that, though they have other responsibilities that are appropriate, that they're getting adequate time and attention to spending time with the Lord, the one thing that is indeed most needful.

The husband is to wash his wife with the water of the Word; that's the language of Ephesians 5:26. And that can include reading together and studying the Bible together, memorizing Scripture together, helping in terms

of applying the scripture to her own life and circumstances. But he's responsible for washing his wife with the water of the Word.

The husband is to cherish his wife by protecting her, protecting her not just physically, but protecting her from a multitude of dangers. For example, protecting her from erroneous theology; that's far more dangerous than physical harm. Perhaps a husband needs to protect her from the influence of bad friends who aren't spiritually-minded. Sometimes he needs to protect her from assuming the wrong responsibilities, not the ones that she should be focused on, or perhaps too many responsibilities. He can protect her from unedifying habits or, of course, from dangerous places. It can even be, at times, protecting her from pressures that are brought from other people, like extended family. This is the work of a husband in shepherding his wife. He is ultimately responsible, of course, for her obedient living as a wife: "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Shepherding your wife and your family at home is a prerequisite for shepherding the Lord's people at church. So when the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3 is addressing the qualifications for men holding office as elders in the church, he actually makes this point. He says in 1 Timothy 3:5, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" And so, exercising leadership in the home is a prerequisite for exercising leadership in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another very, very important aspect of shepherding one's wife and family relates to family worship. Family worship is non-optional for a Christian home. The father is responsible to diligently instruct his family in the ways of the Lord. That's the language of Deuteronomy 6:6 and following, "And thou shalt teach them diligently" (verse 7). Since priorities are what you actually do and not what you say, that means that anchoring family worship to something in your schedule that is unchangeable becomes very important. So, it's important to anchor family worship to something unchangeable in your schedule. You want to ensure that it is a priority, that it will actually get done. Now that could be attaching family worship to family meals. That's a helpful thing. It could be that everyone is in the same place at the same time early morning, and then they scatter in different directions. Or perhaps everyone is together in the house before bed, before they all go to rest. It could be breakfast or dinner or something else as well, but you need to make sure that family worship is taking place. This is a stated time to ensure that you as a husband are shepherding your family. I would recommend setting a designated time for family worship, perhaps in the morning and in the evening, which would be similar to the morning and evening sacrifice in the Old Testament. This should begin on the wedding night, not just when children come along. A Christian home is established when a man and a woman become husband and wife, and it is a Christian family at that moment, and family worship should begin at that moment as well.

Well, for some of you, you're wondering about how exactly this is to be applied. So let me give you some practical suggestions for leading family worship. At the very center of it, of course, is the Bible, and so you should always read a passage of Scripture, and it would be very good to have a system, perhaps, for reading through the Bible. Reading the Bible together every day with your wife and, if you have children, with your family is where they will learn to master the content of the Scriptures. And so we need to be in the Word. That reading can be followed by making brief comments on the passage, in other words, explaining what it means. Now, there may be questions that you don't know the answers to, and it may not be very deep or complicated explanations, but you can point out things in the passage that are pertinent to your family and help them to understand what it means, but also, to be looking for applications of the passage to yourself, as well as to your wife and perhaps geared to your children as well, helping them understand how not just to be a hearer of the Word but a doer also, how it can be practically applied to their life.

Prayer should also be included. For example, praying at the beginning of family worship and then again at the conclusion of family worship would be appropriate. During one of the prayers it would be good to list specific needs of the family or of your congregation or those you know. This will strengthen your family's faith in seeing God answering the prayers that you have as a family lifted up before Him. You should also sing the psalms in family worship, thereby causing the Word of Christ to "dwell in you richly," as you see in Colossians 3. The singing of God's Word puts it in our hearts and not just in our heads, and it exerts a powerful sanctifying influence upon us. And this will also help you and your wife and children to become more familiar with the psalms that they will sing in church. You can learn new ones. You can even make a point to try to memorize portions of the

metrical Psalter together, singing the Psalms together. These can then be sung from memory in the car on the way to church or on trips and other occasions.

Another thing that might be helpful would be to discuss the sermons you hear at church. This review of the sermons will actually increase the benefits that your wife and family receive under the preaching of the Word. The minister goes and sows the good seed of the Word into your hearts and minds, and you're coming along behind as the shepherd of your home, trying to cultivate and nurture that seed in your own heart and in the hearts of your family. You can especially discuss the application of the preaching to your individual lives.

Another element that can be very helpful would be to catechize your wife and children, and I would recommend using the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which is especially useful for these particular purposes. Catechizing is a time-tested means of helping you and your wife and your children to learn spiritual discernment by mastering biblical doctrine. It enables you to define the truth clearly and to distinguish it from falsehood. It will protect your family from being fooled by bad doctrine. Think of the end of Hebrews 5, where he distinguishes between those who are only taking milk and those who are able to eat strong meat because they've had their senses exercised to discern or distinguish between good and evil.

Now, as a wise shepherd, you will need to adapt the way that you conduct family worship to the needs of your own family and even to the various stages of your family's development. With little children, it may be different than when the children are older and wisdom will be needed. I'm giving you suggestions that may serve as some help, but you'll have to adapt these things to your own circumstances.

The husband's constant example and his speech are also training. They're training his wife, either positively or negatively, either by things that you leave undone that should be done, or things that you do that shouldn't be done. The classroom is actually all day long, not just at family worship. If you go back to that passage in Deuteronomy 6:7, he not only says "diligently teach," but he says, "Talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." And so it is a whole life shepherding and discipleship. Your actions will often speak louder than your words.

Also, Christian education is non-optional for a Christian home. Paul warns us in Colossians 2:8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." You compare that to the language of 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. This takes us beyond what we can cover here, but Christian education is indispensable to biblical leadership and shepherding in the home.

Well, by way of conclusion, some of you may be tempted to be thinking to yourself, "You don't know my wife, Pastor. All of the things that you're saying are fine, but you don't know my wife." And that is of course, true. I don't know your wife. But I do know another wife. And here, I'm thinking of Christ's wife, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, you look in the Old Testament at all of the weaknesses, all of the waywardness, all of the failures, all of the fragility of the Old Testament Church. You look in the New Testament, and you find the same thing. It is an example of the most imperfect, at times hard-headed, stubborn, and sinful, of wives. And yet, the Church is married to the most perfect of all husbands, a Husband who is lovingly pursuing and leading His wife. And so I may not know your wife, but the Lord Jesus Christ does, and He knows His wife, the Church. And therefore, you have a great example that is set before you.

I don't know your own struggles, but when we're brought to see afresh our own bankruptcy, and when we're brought under the light of God's Word to see our own sin, it should humble us in repentance and it should send us running again to the Lord Jesus Christ. And in going to Christ, we are quieted by His love for us, His bride. This in itself further strengthens us in grace and enables us to love our own wives in mercy. All of this pertains to the glory of Christ and the gospel in our homes. In the next two lectures, we will explore what the Bible teaches about the role and responsibilities of a godly wife.

Lecture 5

GODLY WIVES 1

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 5

Have you ever found yourself in the middle of a project where you needed more than two hands to complete a task? Perhaps you needed to lift and carry an awkwardly shaped object. In those circumstances, you are certainly grateful when another person comes along and offers to help you. Another set of hands goes a long way toward enabling you to complete your task. You can understand why Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, “Two are better than one.” In Genesis 1 and 2, we read about God creating the first man, Adam. After Adam had named the other creatures, we read, “But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” So God provided for him the first woman, Eve, who became his wife. We read, “And the LORD God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” This provided a pattern for all who would follow. God said, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

What peculiar challenges do women face when hearing what the Bible teaches about godly wives? What role has God given to wives in marriage? Why does God call wives to submit to their husbands? And what are the practical implications of that? And how does all of this relate to Christ and the gospel? In this lecture and the next lecture, we will explore what the Bible teaches about the place of wives within a biblical marriage. As with the other lectures, I will mention many texts of Scripture, and although time will not permit us to quote them all, I would strongly urge you to look them all up. Our thinking needs to be bound to the Bible itself.

And so first of all, in this lecture, we’ll begin by considering a wife’s high calling. I want to introduce some basic points of counsel aimed at setting the perspective of wives before we proceed to considering the main content of this lecture. Wives have indeed a high calling in God’s sight. This privileged role, however, is constantly being undermined by a barrage of secular, ungodly assaults that seek to distort the biblical teaching on the role of women. Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer from the 16th century, wrote, “What you do in your house is worth as much as if you did it up in heaven for our Lord God.” We should accustom ourselves to think of our position and work as sacred and well-pleasing to God, not on account of the position and work, but on account of the Word and faith from which the obedience and work flow.

Being a wife and a mother is a difficult job, but thankfully God gives direction to even those with an overwhelmed heart. In Psalm 61:2 the Psalmist speaks about when our hearts are overwhelmed within us, we look to the Rock that is higher than us. That’s, of course, looking to the Lord Jesus Christ. So different women will respond to the truths that we will be covering in a variety of ways. For example, some genuinely want to grow but will merely look for a list of duties to follow. They want checklist of things that they are to follow. Others genuinely want to grow but will be easily overwhelmed and discouraged. Some, on the other hand, will be tempted to shut their ears in resentment and resistance to the biblical teaching. And, some will be tempted to indifference caused by hopelessness, perhaps. Well, the best response is to be drawn to our heavenly Husband, which will bear the fruit of a teachable spirit and a willing obedience. This includes, of course, differentiating between man’s expectations on the one hand and God’s expectations on the other, as well as accepting our providential limitations.

So, please do not yield to the folly of comparison, comparing yourself as a wife with perhaps other wives that you know or see. In 2 Corinthians 10:12, the Apostle Paul warns the Corinthian church, and he says that those who compare themselves among themselves are not wise. It is tempting, of course, to look around at other people and to see what you think maybe the perfect marriage or family might look like; but, as Paul says, this is not wise. A biblical marriage and family is going to look very, very different from house to house because we're different people, different members of Christ's body with different gifts and talents and even different interests and physical abilities. The point is that we must conform to the specifics of God's law and God's Word, but there is much freedom for variety in how this is implemented. In other words, there are no universal model families that we can take our cue from. Most of all, wives need to remember not to take your eyes off Christ. Comparison can result in the extremes of pride, on one hand, if you think that you're better, or it can result in debilitating discouragement, if you think that you're far inferior to others. But in every case, God says that it is foolish. Our eyes are to be fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me also offer a word to husbands. 1 Corinthians 13:4 and following tells us that love "suffers long." You can also look up Ecclesiastes 7:8-9. And so husbands would do well to remember the patient longsuffering that Christ exemplifies toward His bride. Now husband, of course, is a part of that bride, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you think in your own life of all of the endurance and patience that the Lord has demonstrated toward you. It would be helpful to look at how this is described in Scripture; for example, in Numbers 14:18, or in a variety of places within the Psalms, for example, Psalm 86:15 and Psalm 103:8-10.

Secondly, we should consider the wife's role, which is described in Scripture as a helpmeet. The woman was designed and created to be a helpmeet to her husband as Genesis 2:18 teaches us. The Bible provides us with a beautiful picture in this. Eve was not taken from Adam's head so as to rule over him, nor was she taken from his feet as if he would trample on her, but she was taken from his side to be a suitable companion to complement and complete him. A wife is a helpmeet for her husband, who comes alongside him to support and strengthen and comfort him in the calling that God has given him.

It's helpful to remember that the Bible points us to distinctions between men and women. Let me give you some examples. We're told that the woman was made out of man (1 Corinthians 11:8). She was also made after men (1 Corinthians 11:9). We're told in 1 Timothy 2:13 that she was made for man, and we're also told that she was the first one that was deceived in 1 Timothy 2:14. In terms of marriage, she is a bodily member, and her husband, as we saw in a previous lecture, is her head (Ephesians 5:23). And this, of course, reflects, you'll remember, the relationship between Christ and the Church. A couple of distinctions here may prove helpful to you regarding a person's status.

So, regarding a person's status, women stand on equal ground with men before the Lord in the gospel. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." As a Christian person, there is no distinction between the ability of a man and a woman when it comes to grace and gifts. Women can be equally godly, talented, and intelligent, and so on. But the biblical distinction pertains to the role assigned by God for expressing those gifts and graces. Regarding a person's role, for example, within the church, women are to be in subjection, not teaching or exercising authority over men. 1 Timothy 2:11-12 say, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." And within the home, wives are to submit to their own husbands. These things pertain to role, and this means to gladly assume the role that God assigns is to embrace God's design and His wisdom, which always works best, of course.

The injunction to submit, far from being harsh, is actually beautiful in its godly expressions. This subjection in marriage, the wife's subjection to the husband, is unique, because the Bible says that a wife is to submit "to her own husband," not to all other men. Ephesians 5:22 and Colossians 3:18 teach this. The husband is the head who lovingly leads, and the wife is the helpmeet who submissively follows. This will, for a wife, entail deferring to his judgment, supporting his decisions, and promoting his priorities in the home; consider Titus 2:5 and 1 Peter 3:1-6.

Thirdly, we need to consider a wife's pursuit, and that's described by the word submission. [There're] actually a number of words that are used in the Scriptures to describe this submission. The biblical injunction says that wives are to "submit" to their own husbands (Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:18). It also says that they are to

be “in subjection” to their own husband (Ephesians 5:24 and in 1 Peter 3:1,5). Elsewhere, it says that they are to “revere their husbands” (Ephesians 5:33), and they are to “obey” their husbands (Titus 2:5 and 1 Peter 3:6). So all of these words, submission, and subjection, and reverence, and obedience, they’re all describing this biblical concept of submission. The wife is to submit to her husband.

Now this submission is a reflection of the Church’s relationship to her Bridegroom; the Church is Christ’s bride, and it’s actually reflecting the Church’s relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the whole point, as we’ve seen in a previous lecture, of Ephesians 5:22 and following. And so, in Colossians 3:8 Paul says specifically [that] the wife is to submit to her husband as to the Lord Jesus Christ. Submission is not conditional on the husband doing his part to love as Christ loved the Church. Now, this can be tempting to think along these lines. You cannot say that if your husband loved you more, then you would be a more submissive wife, any more than a husband can say, “Well, I would love my wife more if she were more submissive.” In fact, this is the precise idea that God refutes in 1 Peter 3:1 and following.

This submission, the wife’s submission, is to be expressed even in undesirable circumstances. So we’re told that even if the husband is an unbeliever, 1 Corinthians 7:13-17, or if the husband is acting disobediently, 1 Peter 3, those opening two verses tell us, “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.” And there Peter gives us the example of Sara. Sara proved that unlovable husbands are no excuse for a lack of submission. We are responsible before God for our own behavior. Blame-shifting, blaming others for the faults that we’re guilty of, began immediately after the fall, you’ll remember, and it continues to be a temptation to the present day. We see this in Genesis 3:12-13. The reason this submission is not based on the husband’s action or inaction is because your submission is directed ultimately to Christ, who is always loving and always faithful to you.

You should also recognize that this biblical call to submission is not something that began after the fall. There are some who have put this idea out, that a wife’s submission is a consequence of the fall. No, it is rooted all the way back in creation, and the New Testament makes this clear. And in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 as well as 1 Corinthians 11:3 and 8, the Apostle Paul appeals to creation as the basis of his argument. He also appeals in 1 Corinthians 14:34 to the law.

Well, this submission is inescapable, just as we saw with the husband’s headship. Wives are always saying something through your life, either truthfully or erroneously, about the gospel and the relationship of the church to the Lord Jesus Christ, again, Ephesians 5:24. Well, a woman who embraces all that God calls her to in godly submission is a woman that is truly priceless, and that’s the language that’s used in Proverbs 31; look at verses 10-12 and verses 28-29.

As we noted earlier, a wife is to obey her husband. We see that in Titus 2:5 and 1 Peter 3:6. This is rooted in the fifth commandment, which you can find in Exodus 20:12. And you have to realize that each of the ten commandments provides a moral principle. So in the fifth commandment, God sets down a standard for honoring and respecting all lawful authority, the parent-child relationship being the most basic one. I would encourage you to consult the Westminster Larger Catechism Questions 123-133 for a helpful explanation of this biblical truth. We’re told that the wife is to obey her husband in all things; that’s the language of Ephesians 5:24. The idea of submission and obedience are related to each other.

You’ll recall that God’s design for biblical marriage is oneness. And yet, they are still two people: a husband and a wife. Well, in order for two to function as one, God directs the wife to come under the leadership of the husband. And where there are differences, then she must acquiesce to his desire to lead in following the Lord Jesus Christ. But, we also need to remember that all human authority is derived authority with God-ordained parameters. Only God has ultimate unqualified authority. All of the authority that He gives in this world is delegated from Him. Consequently, for example, a wife is not to submit to her husband if she is asked to sin. Why? Because her first allegiance is to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it would be an abuse of the husband’s position to ask her to do what is dishonoring to the Lord. You’ll remember those words in Acts 4:19 where the apostles respond by insisting that it is better to obey God than men when you are forced to make a choice between the two.

From the time of the fall, it has been a constant temptation for a woman to rebel against her husband. The entrance of sin at the fall made it now, in a sense, unnatural to desire submission, just as it is unnatural for the

husband to desire to love his wife to the degree that he should. And so it is grace in the gospel alone that makes this both desirable and possible. We have to be looking away to these fundamental gospel truths.

Well, on the flip side of a godly wife, you have a contentious wife, and a contentious wife is described in rather vivid color as a “curse” in the book of Proverbs. Look, for example, at 21:19 or 27:15. Well, if a contentious wife is a curse, a godly wife is described in that same book, the book of Proverbs, as a crown (Proverbs 12:4, 19:14, and then, of course, those references within chapter 31 to the virtuous woman).

Obedience to the husband, like to Christ, like obedience to Christ, is to be carried out willingly, cheerfully, fully, and from the heart. The motivation for obedience is not just a duty that we’re required to do, but it is actually something that flows from love for the Lord and love for one’s husband. A wise woman builds up her house rather than tearing it down. She can tear it down through nagging and criticizing and perhaps belittling your husband or dashing dreams, neglecting him, and so on. Proverbs 14:1 says, “Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.”

Well, this means that we need to keep first things first. In other words, relating to your earthly husband is just one more way of walking with your heavenly Husband, and so the relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ provides the pattern and foundation and source of help in living with your earthly husband. You might ask, rightly, the question, “Who is sufficient for these things?” I mean, after all, we often sense that we’re full of bankruptcy and neediness and dependence upon the Lord. Well, we must be led to live upon Christ’s love and led to live upon Christ’s grace. We’re to hold fast to Him and to live for His glory. And this is the heart behind every God-fearing wife.

In this lecture, we have explored what the Bible teaches about a godly wife’s role and pursuits. In the next lecture, we will go on to consider the inner character of a wife who fears the Lord.

Lecture 6

GODLY WIVES 2

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 6

Even children know the difference between common stones that you find in the street and precious stones that you might see in a ring. Precious stones like diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds are rare, and they are truly beautiful to behold. People devote massive effort to digging and mining for these stones, and others are prepared to pay large sums of money to purchase them for jewelry and similar uses. When God describes a godly wife in the Bible, He compares her to a rare, beautiful stone. Proverbs 31:10 says, “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.” The unbelieving world overlooks and even despises the kind of woman that God considers to be a true gem, but Christians believe that “a prudent wife is from the LORD,” as we are told in Proverbs 19:14. How does the knowledge of Christ motivate a godly wife? What are a wife’s top priorities and goals in a biblical marriage? How does her inward character shape and influence everything else that God calls her to do? And in light of a wife’s many responsibilities, how does communion with Christ fit into her thinking and living? In this lecture, we will continue to explore what the Bible teaches about the place of wives within a biblical marriage, and we’ll begin by considering a wife’s motivations.

What is it that motivates her, that drives her, that fuels all that she does? And there are a couple of things here that are important to highlight. First of all, she is to maintain a Christ-centered perspective. In other words, wives, you are to look past your husband to Christ, Who stands behind him. That’s why Ephesians 5:22 says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” Your gaze is to go beyond your husband to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Now, when your husband loves you, what should the impact be? It should tangibly warm your heart to Christ’s greater love. You should see in your husband’s love a little picture, a little glimmer, of the love that Christ bears towards you. Your personal submission to Christ has a practical impact on your marriage because you submit to Christ how? By tangibly submitting to your husband who Christ has put over you. You can’t say, “I’m submissive to Christ” and not be submissive to your husband. And, it is far easier to be submissive to Christ. Christ is worthy of such devotion, even when your husband is not.

Conversely, rebelling against your husband is actually rebelling against Christ, which is a heinous sin. Think of how 1 Samuel 15:23 describes rebellion. It says that it is “as the sin of witchcraft.” This Christ-centered approach explains why the consequences of a wife’s disobedience are so significant. It does not just affect the good name of the woman or even of the family, but rather the good name of our Savior. It is His name that is impugned. In Titus 2:4-5, when it’s addressing the young women, it says that they are to be obedient to their own husbands “that the word of God be not blasphemed.” It is God’s Word that ends up being dishonored. You also know that the gospel is distorted. If the relationship of the wife to her husband is a reflection of the relationship of the church to Christ, then her unwillingness to submit, of course, skews or distorts a true understanding of the gospel. Your submission to your husband illustrates even for him, as well as for the world, the church’s submission to Christ.

This Christ-centered perspective, also addresses one of the wives’ primary temptations, and that pertains to fear. That fear, of course, can be prompted by an obvious sense of vulnerability. I mean, you are being called upon to follow a man, a husband, who is not perfect, who makes mistakes, who is not as fully godly as he could

or should be. That can engender a measure of fear and vulnerability. But following your husband is really about trusting the Lord and trusting His Word and His ways. So faith, and the increase of faith, is actually the remedy for fear. And this all comes together in the context of wives.

Notice the connection between faith and fear in that section of 1 Peter 3:5-6. We read, "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." Do you see the connection between trusting the Lord and not being afraid? In the first section, it says these women of old were trusting the Lord like Sarah was, and those who follow that same godly example are those who are "not afraid with any amazement." And so the remedy for fear is an increase of faith, of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. So there's this Christ-oriented perspective.

But then, secondly, there's also a husband-oriented perspective. You know from what we covered in previous lectures that your husband cannot replace Jesus in your life. Christ is given the preeminent place. The relationship with your husband is temporary and secondary, whereas your relationship to Christ is permanent and primary, but your earthly responsibility is to care for your husband and to please him. When Paul is writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 7, he's talking about singleness and marriage, and in addressing those that are married, he says, in verse 34, "She that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." And so a godly woman's focus, and her goal, is to please her husband, not herself. Now this is not the same as being a people-pleaser, because ultimately, the motivation is Christ-centered. Ultimately, the motivation is to please the Lord Jesus Christ in seeking to please a husband's godly desires, as Colossians 3:23 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

But, this means that a wife must learn how to please her husband. This isn't something that is automatic or something that comes naturally. It is something that is to be studied. She needs to learn what his desires are, his goals are, his priorities are for their marriage, and for the family, as he's seeking to follow the Lord and to lead his wife and family in a way that will glorify the Lord. That has to be learned. What exactly are his goals and priorities?

She is to do her utmost to create a happy haven of rest, to do him good and not evil, which includes cultivating a peaceful and a loyal relationship where the husband's heart can safely trust in his wife. Proverbs 31 makes reference to this in verses 11 and 12. The motivation for serving one's husband must not be self-serving. So, you'll remember that love is giving and not getting. And yet, it can be tempting at times to give in order to get something in return, but the motivation to serve one's husband can't be a secret way of seeking to serve one's self.

That brings us, secondly, to considering a wife's goals. What are a wife's chief priorities? Well, a wife's number one priority is cultivating her fellowship and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The more you as a wife are growing in intimacy with and obedience to Jesus, the more you will be growing in the depths of intimacy and obedience with your husband. First and foremost, a godly wife must fear the Lord. Without this priority, everything else will fail. Everything else will be in vain. But her first priority after the Lord is to be serving as a helpmeet to her husband. We saw that at the very beginning, in the last lecture in Genesis 2:20 and following, that was the design that God had created for marriage. This means organizing your decisions as a wife throughout the day in terms of meeting your husband's goals and his desires for the family. That means asking yourself questions and determining how you're going to allot your time and what you are going to put first on a list of things to do in contrast to something that might be on the bottom of that list. Are the things at the top of the list in keeping with the goals that the husband has set for the family?

This priority also entails a wife loving her husband first, and then her children second, before the rest of the world. So sometimes those who have children, mothers, can sometimes push their children to the fore as the number one priority, and the husband is relegated to something else. But biblically speaking, loving your husband is first, and your children are actually second, and then after your children come other responsibilities that God calls you to. You see this in Titus 2:4. This is why the Bible says that a godly wife is to be a "keeper at home," or, it could be translated a "worker" at home in Titus 2:5. Now this text applies to all wives, both those with children and those without children; they're all to be keepers at home. This passage is not talking about the impermissibility of women working or making money, that's clear from Proverbs 31. Rather, it is saying that a wife's world, if you will, and priorities are to be centered on diligently fulfilling her responsibilities at home. So

the focus of her world is on the home, and everything else is to work around that. It means, as we saw in a previous lecture, that she's also to be her husband's chief disciple; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 tell us this.

And after a woman's priorities at home, her husband and then her children, her next priority is ministering to other women in the church. So again, Titus 2 helps us here in verses 3 and 4. The women who have gained maturity and godliness and experience are to take all of that - from their study of the Scriptures and from working all of that out in an application into their lives - they're to take all of that wisdom and they're to impart it to other women, less mature or younger women in the church, so that even those who have reached older years are to use their time and energy in caring for other women in the church. When the home becomes empty of children, it is to be replaced with discipling and serving younger women. This involves, as I noted, taking lessons that you have learned in applying the Scripture and communicating that to other ladies.

Thirdly, we need to consider a wife's godly character and demeanor, and it would be helpful for you to consider the description provided in Proverbs 31. In fact, if you have your Bible, you might wish to open to that. Let me direct your attention to highlighting just a handful of the things that are given to us there. We're told that a virtuous woman is industrious, and this is clear in verses 10 and following. It includes caring for her family's clothing; look at verse 13, as well as verses 21-22 and verse 24. It includes caring for her family's food; you see that in verses 14-15. But beyond that, we're told that she is generous to those outside the home, generous to those who are in need. She's identifying needs and looking for ways to provide for them. You see that in verse 20. We're told that she supports and furthers her husband's success in verse 23. We're told that she is careful and financially prudent in verse 16. And, we're told that she uses her tongue for wisdom and kindness in verse 26. Lastly, we're told that in all of these things, she is diligent (Proverbs 31:27 and 31).

Turning our attention to other places in Scripture, we discover many other aspects of a godly wife's character. She is to be respectful to her husband. We've seen that in Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3. But, this is especially manifest in the way that she speaks both to him and how she speaks of him to other people. Notice the language of 1 Peter 3:6. When Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:13, he says that the godly woman is not an idle busybody. She is not an idle busybody. Her hands are full of good labor, of godly labor, and she's not lazily interfering, as it were, in other people's business. Now that takes place in a lot of ways, and in our modern context, it perhaps expresses itself most of all through the computer online. Things like texting and social media and things like that have become very popular, and they can easily become a trap in which you become an idle busybody busying yourself in other people's business and their private matters, rather than focusing your attention on what God has called you to.

Another description that the Lord gives is that a godly woman is to exemplify chaste and reverent behavior (1 Peter 3:2). That includes practical things. Her godliness is expressed, for example, in modesty, in modest dress or apparel; 1 Timothy 2:9 teaches this, as well as 1 Peter 3:3. She's also to be sensible, pure, and kind (Titus 2:5). And that well-known text in 1 Peter 3:4 [says that] a godly wife is to adorn herself with a "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." Now the world, of course, will not put much value on this at all, and there may even be times when those within the church don't value it as they ought. But, the godly wife will find her heart aroused by the thought that God Himself considers the meekness and quietness of spirit that she is exhibiting to be of great price, of great value. We're also told that a godly wife is to be prudent (Proverbs 19:14). And, if she has children, then she is to raise those children in the fear of God; one example of that would be Proverbs 6:20-21. And, as we noted earlier, she's to live in a way, in a manner, that the heart of her husband will safely trust in her (Proverbs 31:11).

And above all, the capstone, if you will, or we could say the foundation of everything else, in a godly wife's character and demeanor is that she fears God (Proverbs 31:30). The fear of the Lord is the soul of godliness. It is the primary description that we have both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament of the people of God; they are those who fear the Lord. They're conscious of God's glory and exaltation; they're conscious of God's presence; and they're conscious of all that God calls them to be and do in His Word.

As we noted in the last lecture, relating to your earthly husband is just one more way of walking with your heavenly Husband. And in all of the many distractions life entails, a godly wife must remember the "one thing needful." That language is taken from the account given to us of Jesus in Bethany at the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. And you'll remember the scenario there, how Martha was cumbered, she was busy with

many things, she was busy serving and caring for the needs, and there was Mary sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Martha, of course, complained about Mary not helping her. And Jesus tells her, “No, Mary has actually chosen the better part. She’s remembering the one thing needful.” What Martha was doing is commendable; it has its place. But what Mary was doing in sitting at the feet of the Savior is the one thing needful, the first priority that a woman is to pursue. Wives have many responsibilities.

So, let me conclude with an illustration which may serve as a stimulus to wives who seek to walk in fellowship with Christ amid very busy schedules. A number of ministers were assembled in the home of one of them for the discussion of difficult questions. And it was asked how the command to “pray without ceasing” could be complied with, so you had various ministers putting forward various ideas. And at length, one of the number was appointed to write an essay upon this theme to be read at the next meeting.

Well, there was a plain, sensible servant girl who was in the house, and she overheard this. And she exclaimed, “What! A whole month waiting to tell the meaning of that text? It is one of the easiest and best texts in the Bible!”

“Well, well,” said one of the old ministers, “Mary, what can you say about it? Let us know how you understand it. Can you pray all the time?”

“Oh, yes, sir,” she said.

“What? When you have so many things to do?”

“Why, sir, the more I have to do, the more I can pray.”

“Indeed,” said the minister, “Well, Mary, do let us know how it is, for most people think otherwise.”

And here’s the answer that she gave. “Why, sir,” said the girl, “when I first open my eyes in the morning, I pray that the Lord would open the eyes of my understanding; and while I am dressing, I pray that I may be clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. And when I have washed me, I pray for the washing of regeneration; and as I begin to work, I pray that I may have strength equal to my day. And when I began to kindle the fire, I pray that God’s work may revive in my soul. And as I sweep out the house, I pray that my heart may be cleansed from all its impurities. And while preparing and partaking of my breakfast, I desire and pray to be fed with the hidden manna and the sincere milk of the Word. And as I am busy with the little children, I look up to God as my reconciled Father in Christ and pray for the Spirit of adoption, that I may know myself more assuredly as His child. And so on all the day long, everything I do furnishes me with a thought for prayer.”

“Enough, enough!” exclaimed the old minister. “These things are revealed to babes and often hid from the wise and prudent.” He said, “Go on, Mary, pray without ceasing; and, as for us, my brethren,” speaking to the other ministers, “let us bless the Lord for this wonderful practical exposition, and remember that He has said the meek will He guide in judgment.”

And of course, after this, the essay was considered no longer necessary.

So, in conclusion, in the last four lectures, we have considered what the Bible teaches about the distinct roles and responsibilities of a godly husband and a godly wife. In the next two lectures, we will return to the theme discussed in the opening lectures about the priority of unity in a godly marriage. In doing so, we will explore some of the practical areas where this unity should be pursued.

Lecture 7

COMMUNICATION

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 7

Many of you often use a cell phone. What is the purpose of a phone? It's obviously for communicating with other people. You may carry it with you so that others can get in contact with you, or so that you can reach them when you need to do so. People use cell phones for texting, speaking, and listening, but they also use them to access Internet websites, or to get directions when traveling from one place to another. You may even be listening to these lectures on a phone. But for a cell phone to work properly, there must be a connection on both sides. If you're talking into the phone and there is no one on the other side, it will not be of much use to you; or, if you visit a website that does not exist, you will not receive any benefit. Connection is essential.

The same is true more generally in all human relationships, but especially in marriage. To pursue unity with your spouse, you must connect with them in order to share the same thoughts and ideas about what the Bible teaches. If this communication breaks down, well, everything else in the relationship will also crumble. There are as many threats to marital unity as there are types of sin. In both our relationship with the Lord and in our relationship with others, we see that sin repels, whereas grace draws. Sin separates, whereas the grace of the gospel actually unites.

In these last two lectures, we will cover four of the most common areas in which marital conflict arises. We'll cover two of them in this lecture and then two more in the final lecture. But the purpose of these sessions is to illustrate how the principles we have previously laid down are applied to these specific challenges. Each of these areas need to be more thoroughly studied than we'll have time and space to cover here, but these introductory points will assist you in the practical pursuit of oneness or unity within marriage. And, as I noted, we have selected four of the most common areas of difficulty when it comes to unity in marriage.

Well, how important is communication in a godly marriage? What problems often arise in this area of marriage, and how does God say to address them? If God gives a couple children, what does He say about raising those children? Why is it essential that spouses be united in their understanding of what the Bible teaches on these matters? In this lecture, we will consider cultivating marital unity through communication and in raising children. In the next lecture, we will consider two more areas that are potentially challenging, but also prime opportunities for strengthening your relationship with your spouse.

First of all, cultivating marital unity through godly communication. Godly communication is essential to a biblical marriage. In fact, breakdown in communication is one of the most common areas of marital dysfunction. Many other areas in marriage will suffer from a lack of clear, biblical, faithful communication. You'll remember, for example, in our opening two lectures where we dealt with unity and conflict resolution. We saw there how, in resolving conflict biblically, communication was indispensable. In Ephesians 4:29 we read, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." You should note the context of verses 25-31, in which we find that particular passage. The Bible also teaches that the tongue is directly tied to the heart. Jesus said in Matthew 15:18, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart." In other words, your mouth is actually a window

into your soul. We can see what's inside our souls by what comes out of our mouths. And so it's no wonder that James, in his epistle, James 1:26, says that our speech is actually a test of our spirituality, our godliness.

Consider some of the prerequisites to godly communication. What are the things that are necessary, that lie behind godly communication? I'll mention a handful of them. First of all, you need a desire to please Christ more than yourself and a desire to please Christ more than your spouse. You need to be cultivating a growing sense of gospel humility. Pride is actually one of the primary root causes of breakdowns in communication. You might find help and looking at a few passages in the New Testament, for example, Ephesians 4:1-3 or Philippians 2:1-4 or James 4:6-7 or 1 Peter 5:5-9. So there needs to be a cultivation of gospel humility. You also need a sense of accountability to the Lord for your words. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 12:36-37, "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Another prerequisite is a commitment to taking the time to communicate. So, obviously, having a conversation requires that you set aside time for this priority. These are all prerequisites.

Well, in turning our attention to communication itself, it is helpful, first of all, to distinguish between verbal and nonverbal communication. That is, communication that uses words and ways of communicating without words.

First, we'll consider nonverbal communication. You realize, I'm sure, that you can say volumes without uttering a word. For example, people regularly communicate in the following nonverbal ways: they'll communicate love or happiness or fear or sadness, indifference, apathy, anger, physical attraction, irritation, discouragement, doubt, guilt, boredom. All of these things can be communicated without the use of words: through one's disposition, their attitude or the look that they have on their face or their body language. So, nonverbal communication includes how we say what we say, in other words, our attitude or our disposition. Think of the various ways that you can say, for example, "Could you please come here?" Well, you can use the words, "Could you please come here," with an attitude that communicates anger or desperation or maybe even sadness. It can communicate love; it can communicate cheerfulness; it can communicate apathy. It's not just what we say, but it's how we communicate what we're saying.

Our actions, of course, also communicate. If you say that you want to spend some time with your spouse, but instead you waste lots of time on the computer, your actions will actually speak louder than your words. We need to keep our word, keep our promises.

Well, in thinking about verbal communication, the first part of verbal communication is actually listening. The first part of verbal communication is listening. You have to commit to listening first, before speaking. James 1:19 says, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." We could avoid problems half of the time if we would simply stop and concentrate on what our spouse is saying. Consider Proverbs 10:19. God says that jumping ahead to what we think our spouse is thinking before we actually hear what they say is utter folly. God says in Proverbs 18:13, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

So, let me provide some practical commitments and some practical guidelines with regards to listening. Some of them are rather simple. First of all, you should concentrate on what your spouse is saying. You have to actually focus your mind on what they're saying. You should not interrupt until they're finished saying what they're saying. You also need to be careful not to formulate in your mind your answer while the other person is talking. You'll be thinking about one thing rather than thinking about what they're communicating to you. You also need to give each other time to process information and to respond. It's especially helpful to ask questions in order to clarify what your spouse means by the words that they're using. And perhaps most importantly - and this is one that I hope you'll really hold on to - do not assume that you understand what your spouse is saying until you can restate what your spouse has said to their satisfaction. And, this is of enormous help. It will solve many problems. Your spouse can finish telling you something that they think is very important. The best thing to do is to start by saying, "This is what I understand you to be saying," and to actually repeat it, and to not move on until they are satisfied that you actually are understanding them. This is a big help.

The second part of verbal communication is speaking. So we begin with listening, and then we turn to speaking. Bridling the tongue comes with great difficulty; you'll know the passage in James 3:2. James is saying this is one of the most difficult things, to actually bridle the tongue. It means that the believer should be praying for

help because of the difficulty. In fact, we sing of this in Psalm 141:3 where it says, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the doors of my lips.” Failure to bridle the tongue creates great havoc and damage. In fact, that passage in James 3:5 and following describes it as a little fire; it begins as a little fire, and it ends up consuming everything all around it. It can be very destructive. Conversely, guarding the mouth saves you from trouble. Proverbs 21:23 says, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.” This means that if you can discipline your tongue, then much marital grief will be avoided.

Another point that is important with regards to speaking is a commitment to be open and honest. Do not tell a partial truth, and do not be evasive in your conversation with your wife. Be straightforward in what you are saying. Let your yes be yes and your no, no. You’ll remember, in the first session, the importance of openness and how that cultivates trust. Now this, of course, has to be balanced with another point, a complementary point. Proverbs 15:1 tells us, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” We need to know how to answer and how to ensure that our speech is gracious and seasoned with salt, as we read in Colossians 4:6. So, you need to guard how you say what you say. Consider Proverbs 16:32, Colossians 4:6 which we’ve mentioned, and Ephesians 4:29-32. For example, this includes avoiding a sharp or harsh tone, avoiding outbursts or yelling or name-calling or belittling, which are better known in the Bible as bitterness, anger, slander, malice, and so forth. You’re not to respond in like kind if your spouse is sinning with their tongue, Proverbs 26:4-5.

Another factor that’s easy to overlook is, you should remember that the timing of what you say can have just as big of an impact as what you say. In other words, ask yourself the question, “Is this the best time to say this?” Now, do not needlessly delay. You need to be prompt in dealing with issues, but always think about what to say before you say it. Proverbs 15:28, “The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.” There’s reflection and consideration; “What should I say, and what is the best timing for saying it?” Some areas, of course, will be easier to talk about than others, and that means you need to work on those areas that are most challenging.

Let me give you some examples. That could include your spiritual walk before the Lord or your opinions about certain things or concerns, your interests, your emotions, your goals and plans, perhaps your expectations. Sometimes talking about finances is difficult, or about biblical convictions or about your work. Oftentimes, talking about parenting can be difficult, or dreams that you have for the future or physical intimacy in marriage, talking about friends or problems, failures, victories, current events, even what you read. Some of these are far easier to discuss than others, but it gives us an example of the kind of things that we can consider.

Now, there are two opposite errors when it comes to communication. On the one hand, you can be tempted to blow up; there is an explosion; you’re very upset. On the other hand, you can be tempted to clam up, to actually kind of pull inward and to stop talking. But not speaking is also a sin. If you tend to clam up or to shut down, to stop speaking, then you need to work on getting what is on the inside to the outside in a godly spirit. We also need to be able to communicate reproof with a gentle spirit when that is needed. Think of how it’s described in Galatians 6:1 or, as we saw in a previous lecture, Matthew 18:15 and following, or Proverbs 25:12.

Above and beyond some of these practical manners, this includes cultivating spiritual conversation. Just as we are to speak with our children all day about spiritual things, as we see in Deuteronomy 6:6 and following, so married couples should cultivate spiritual conversation. There’s a beautiful illustration of this in the prophet Malachi 3:16-18. Spiritual-mindedness produces spiritual conversation. Notice how these are tied together in Romans 8:5-6, as well as the opening verses of Colossians 3. What you think about most is what you will talk about most. Like an overflowing glass, if you continue to fill the mind with good things, it will eventually spill out your mouth. We are to study one another so that we know how to best stir one another up to love and to good deeds as we see in Hebrews 10:24. So, self-consciously plan and employ your mouth to build up your spouse and to minister grace unto them.

Let me provide some further practical suggestions. First of all, you need to be willing to admit that you are part of the problem (Proverbs 20:6), and you need to be willing to change. You need also to avoid using emotionally-charged words. Be responsible for your own emotions, as well as your words and actions, without blaming your sin on your spouse. Think of James 1:13-15, which may provide some help. Do not rehearse old arguments. Remember that where forgiveness has been granted, those things are to be forgotten; they’re to be buried and put

out of our thoughts. In other words, you are to deal with the present needs and circumstances and not focus so much on the past.

As we noted earlier, you need to learn to communicate nonverbally in your attitude and actions, and you need to apply your mind to understanding why your spouse is saying what they're saying. So, for example, if they say, "You don't love me," then you need to think about what is behind that. What do they mean? What prompted that? What is their real concern? And this is a big part of growing to know your spouse. And, as Jesus says in Matthew 7:12, we're to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. You should always be more angry about your own sin than you are about your spouse's sin. There's that language of Job in Job 40:3-5, also that same book, Job 42:6, or you think of the expression of sorrow for sin in Ezra 9:6. Another practical suggestion would be to major on humbling yourself and admitting wrong. Make this one of your chief goals, that you want to uncover and acknowledge whatever you've done that is wrong. As noted above, pride is the primary culprit in communication breakdowns. I would encourage you to make a point of doing a thorough study of what the Bible teaches about the tongue and speech. Then seek the Lord's grace in applying these truths to your marriage relationship.

Secondly, we need to consider cultivating marital unity in child rearing. It is possible that a significant portion of your life will be devoted to raising children, and young couples should not make the mistake of thinking that they have time before they need to think about this topic. It is better to have talked through how you will raise your children before they arrive. You must be unified in your perspective and plan. Consider the biblical view of covenant children. The Bible teaches us that our children belong to the Lord: Genesis 17:7, 'I will be a God to you and to your children.' Our goal is to raise up "a godly seed" for the Lord, as we read in Malachi 2:15. Children are intended to be a blessing and a reward from the Lord. We sing about this in Psalm 127:3-5. On the other hand, foolish, ungodly children are a curse to their parents. Proverbs has a great deal to say about this [in] Proverbs 10:1, 15:20, 17:25, 19:13, 21:20, and others. Remember that parenting is a temporary stewardship. The husband-wife relationship is characterized by oneness, and the parent-child relationship is one of fruitfulness. The former, husband-wife, relationship is the first priority and the latter, parent-child, is secondary.

You need to learn how to biblically pursue proactive training. So first of all, discussion of spiritual matters in the home should be all day long. You should teach your children everywhere and all the time about God's Word. We saw that in Deuteronomy 6. You also see it in Deuteronomy 11:19 and following. Your own and your children's spiritual well-being is dependent on everyday exhortation. Hebrews 3:13 says, "Exhort one another daily." And so, the Christian's prayer is to see biblical faithfulness passed down through your children to your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren after you, if the Lord wills. Think of that language in Psalm 78:5-6 or Deuteronomy 4:9. As we noted in a previous lecture, Christian education is non-optional for a Christian home, and family worship is also non-optional for a Christian home, but godliness and child rearing will also include the practice of discipline.

Discipline is corrective; it is to train children, not primarily to punish them. Notice how the Lord brings this out in Hebrews 12:9-11. So, it is to train and to redirect the child rather than to exact justice on them. We're to use chastening during childhood "while there is hope," as Proverbs 19:18 says. Discipline is certainly not an excuse to satisfy the parent's unrighteous desires for control - "I'll show you who is bigger and better" -, nor is it an excuse to express vengeance - being angry and making the child pay for it. You cannot use discipline to vent your sinful response to a child who causes you some embarrassment or irritation or inconvenience or [is] wasting your time or perhaps even accidentally damaging your possessions. No. Disciplining our children is a matter of serving the Lord and obeying the Lord. This is why a failure to chasten them is actually rebellion on the parent's part against God. The Lord says, "Withhold not correction from the child" (Proverbs 23:13-14). Furthermore, a failure to chasten children is actually hateful to the child. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." You'll see the same point in 19:18. So, a failure to chasten them is miserable. It's miserable, of course, for the parent. The Bible says, "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame," Proverbs 29:15,17. A failure to chasten or discipline a child is a means of honoring our children above God. You have the example of Eli with his sons. Go back and read 1 Samuel 2:29 and 3:13; the Lord actually chastened Eli because he refused to restrain his sons in their ungodliness.

God has ordained the use of the rod in the family. You see that throughout the Proverbs. You see it as well in the New Testament, like Hebrews 12. So, in the family God has ordained the rod; in the state or government,

God has ordained the sword, as we see in Romans 13:4; and within the church, the Lord has ordained the use of the keys, the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19): the rod for the family, the sword for the state, and keys for the church. We should follow the wisdom of God in using an implement, a rod, for disciplining children. This, of course, requires faith in God's Word, because we may be hesitant to do so. But Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." We need to believe the Word of God and to act upon it. And that rod should be coupled with rebuke, so with words. The children need both instruction and chastening. Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom." A rod is necessary because children are foolish and devoid of understanding (Proverbs 10:13, 22:15, 26:3). And the use of the rod is to be motivated by love, again, Proverbs 13:24 and Proverbs 19:18. Contrary to what the child thinks, maybe even what the parent thinks, the child will not die from the use of the rod when it's administered lovingly, but it may be a means of saving his soul from eternal death, as Proverbs 23:13-14 teach.

Now we're not restricted, of course, to the use of the rod as the only form of parental discipline. There are other ways in which children can be trained and taught, but our discipline is to serve as a model of God's discipline of us. Again, Hebrews 12:9-11 is crucial here, where the Lord actually draws the parallel between a parent and a child and God's dealings in His chastening of His children. This is, of course, never enjoyable, but it is fruitful as that passage in Hebrews says. It can bring forth "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" to those who are trained by it. Discipline is to be directed to the heart as well as to the actions. Therefore, parents must learn to discipline for attitude and not just the child's actions. And of course, it is important to discipline promptly (Proverbs 13:24). Otherwise, there's a disconnect between what the child is done and the discipline if there's a lapse of time that transpires in the meantime.

But consistency is the absolute number one most fundamentally crucial element in discipline. Without consistency, all will fail. With it, discipline will be more effective, in fact, less frequent. So if there is a consistency in discipline, which is difficult, it'll be far more effective. It'll actually reduce the amount of discipline, rather than those who, through laziness or ignorance or self-centeredness or even sinful anger, end up disciplining sometimes and then not disciplining many other times. This brings confusion to the children. Discipline, of course, should not be in anger. Disciplining consistently and immediately actually prevents built-up frustration. The Bible tells us we are not to "provoke" our children (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21). And there are a few ways, for example, of provoking them to discouragement. It would include, as we've just noted, inconsistent discipline for the same kinds of offenses. The child will actually be provoked, discouraged, if sometimes they're disciplined [and] sometimes they're not disciplined for the same thing. They can be provoked by disciplining out of selfish frustration on the parent's part or by misjudging the child's motives or falsely accusing them or failing to admit our own wrongs and to ask them for forgiveness. These are examples of ways in which we can provoke our children.

Well, in this lecture, we considered two potential threats to unity in marriage, both communication and childrearing. In the next lecture, we will consider two more areas that require an accurate understanding of biblical teaching.

Lecture 8

FINANCES AND PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 8

When someone intends to construct a new building, they begin with a blueprint, a drawing that shows all the details of how it will be built. Then, the person overseeing the project will direct different crews to carry out their responsibilities. Someone will clear and level the ground, another crew will pour the foundation, and all the other crews have to work together for the remainder: building the walls, the roof, finishing the interior rooms, installing plumbing, electricity, and so forth. As we have seen throughout this module, God builds biblical families. He provides the blueprints in the Scriptures, and He directs the various members of the home to carry out their respective responsibilities. Working together under the Lord's leadership is essential. When either husbands or wives depart from God's plan, disunity erupts in the marriage and the family is hindered. It is important, therefore, that godly couples stay alert to various dangers that could disrupt that unity and work together in following the Lord and His Word.

As we noted in the previous lecture, there are as many threats to marital unity as there are types of sin. And in both our relationship with the Lord and in our relationship with others, we see that sin repels and gospel grace draws. So in these last two sessions, we're focusing our attention on areas that are often challenging for maintaining unity. You'll need to, of course, study these areas more thoroughly than we have time to cover here, but we intend to provide some important points that will assist you in pursuing oneness in marriage.

Why are finances often a source of disunity in marriage? What does the Bible teach about money? How can spouses cultivate unity in following the Lord's Word in this area? What about the physical relationship in marriage? What place does God assign to it? And how can this aspect of marriage be used for the glory of God? In this final lecture, we will consider two more areas that often present challenges to unity in a biblical marriage, first of all, finances and then, secondly, the sexual relationship.

So, first of all, cultivating marital unity in the area of finances. This brief outline that we're going to cover is not intended as a comprehensive treatment, of course, of this topic, but hopefully it will provide some points of discussion for husbands and wives. You recognize, I'm sure, that your own upbringing and your personality and your individual strengths and weaknesses will have a role in determining your expectations about family finances. And in some circumstances, husbands and wives come from very different backgrounds. But you must use finances as another means of pursuing unity. You need to work together on the same team and contribute your respective strengths to tackling financial challenges. You'll need to apply the other principles that we've covered in these lectures to attain unity in this area.

So let's begin by thinking of the biblical view of money and stewardship. What is the relationship between God and money, for example? Well, the Bible says that all of our possessions belong to the Lord, and our ability to obtain wealth comes from the Lord. So the "earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 24:1). He owns the "cattle on a thousand hills," and you'll note, for example, in 1 Chronicles 29:11-12 that the Lord tells His people that He is the One who gives or withholds wealth. In 1 Corinthians 4:7, Paul says, 'What do you have that you have not received?' All comes from the Lord, and that underlines the fact that our trust is in the Lord, not in riches. Jesus speaks to this in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:25-34. Paul addresses it when he writes

Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:17 and 19. And you see several examples of this in Proverbs, including 16:3. So our trust is not in riches, but rather in the Lord, and we must be faithful stewards of what God gives to us. It's given to us from the Lord to be used for His glory and His honor. Wealth should never be an end in itself, but rather a means to advancing the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, or in providing a competent portion for His people to serve Him with. You can look up Proverbs 15:16 and Ecclesiastes 2:10-11.

So we've considered the relationship of God and money. We should also consider the relationship of family and money. We know that the Bible teaches that the husband is responsible before God to provide for his family. 1 Timothy 5:8 says, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." You can compare this to Ephesians 5:29. God teaches us to work hard and to use the gifts He's given us in pursuit of meeting our needs. This is true in the Old Testament, Proverbs 13:11, and in Paul's instructions in the New Testament, 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12.

Contentment, of course, is a Christian virtue. So in 1 Timothy, the Apostle Paul says that "godliness with contentment is great gain." And in Philippians 4:11-13, he describes how he knew what it was like to lack, to not have much, to be poor, and he knew what it was like to have abundance, to have more wealth, but he draws the conclusion that in all of these circumstances, he had to learn contentment. So, contentment is something that has to be studied, that has to be cultivated. It is a grace that we are to grow in by the help of the Holy Spirit, and that's closely connected to another Christian virtue, namely, generosity. Christians are a generous people. Why? Because it reflects God Himself in the gospel. All of the imagery of the Lord coming to His people is one of lavishing on His people, of bestowing gifts on His people, of providing abundantly for His people; and so the picture of God in the gospel is one that shouts generosity. And therefore Christians, who are brought under the power of that gospel, likewise bear the fruit of generosity. Proverbs 11:24 and 25 are helpful, as well as Ephesians 4:28.

Well, all of this background prepares us to think about what our priority should be with regards to money. And we note, first of all, that we are to give to the Lord His portion of our finances first. This is seen in many places; Proverbs 3:9-10 and Malachi 3:8-12 would be examples. We noted that the Lord actually owns everything that we have, and we express that in a tangible way by giving Him the first fruits of our labors.

Wisdom teaches us to have a plan with our money. We're not to be haphazard, but we are to be reflective and following what the Scripture has to say; Luke 14:28 and Proverbs 27:23-24 are helpful. That includes, for example, godly families doing their best to save money where possible and not just to spend money. A prudent man foresees difficulties and prepares himself, the book of Proverbs says. And so the Lord's people, as they are able, seek to save and not just squander or spend what they have. We need to especially beware of the problems that come with debt. Proverbs 22:7 tells us that "the borrower is servant to the lender," and Romans 13:8 says we're to "owe no man any thing." And so, we're to at least be aware of the problems that can come with especially consumer debt.

We also need to learn to get godly counsel in important financial decisions. This is a principle of wisdom. We should seek two or three, perhaps more at times, who are wise and who are godly, who know the Word of God, to give us counsel when we reach difficult decisions. Again, Proverbs tells us a lot about this (15:22, 19:20, and 20:18).

But, we need to get to the root of the matter. So, financial struggles or disagreements or conflicts are not just a matter of finances. The root problem is always found below that, inside the heart. And there are a number of root problems that I would mention when it comes to financial tensions within marriage. The first, of course, is pride. Proverbs 18:12 warns us about this. It creates contention. Another root problem would be selfishness, having an interest in what we want rather than in focusing on others, which is the spirit of the gospel, as Philippians 2:3-4 teach us. Another one would be idolatry. It is possible to make money an idol, and yet the Lord warns us to beware of idols. We cannot serve both God and mammon, the Lord Jesus tells us. We'll either love one and hate the other, or despise one and esteem the other. And so we need to be aware of the root problem of idolatry. Another one would be laziness. It is possible to be slothful and therefore fall into all sorts of financial difficulties; Proverbs 13:4 speaks about this. Similarly, irresponsibility can be a problem, not seeking to walk with understanding and wisdom in the things that the LORD gives to us; Proverbs 25:19. Lastly, another root problem can be men-pleasing, so, a concern about how others see us, what others think about us, and using money in order to gain the favor of other people. All of these are hidden in the heart and can lie underneath the surface of financial tension at times.

We need to pursue spiritual fruitfulness. So in dealing with these root issues, what does the Bible call us to? Well, it calls us to repentance, to repent of our sins as sin before the LORD and to turn from those sins, forsaking them, to turn unto the Lord for mercy. We're to study the biblical principles that God has given with regards to finance and to seek to apply them to our life. Prayer is an essential response. Remember in Philippians 4:6 we're reminded that all of these cares that often create fears and other difficulties need to actually be taken to the Lord, that we are in everything with prayer and thanksgiving to make our petitions known to the Lord. He, of course, is the One who sovereignly rules over everything, and He is the One who ultimately provides for everything, and so our petitions should be laid at His feet.

Another response is planning. In Proverbs 6:6-8, Solomon points us to the example of the ant, one of the smallest creatures. But he points us there as an illustration of diligence and of planning. Later on in Proverbs 27:23-24 says, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds." Well, in the Old Testament they were an agrarian society, and so their wealth was largely wrapped up in their livestock. And so being diligent to know the state of your flock was actually diligence in understanding or knowing your financial circumstances. There's diligence that we're also called to. In archery, if you do not aim your bow and arrow at the target, you probably will not hit it. Likewise, husbands and wives need to establish financial goals that are drawn from Scripture, and then they need to formulate a plan ahead of time on how to reach those goals by considering, for example, both your income and your expenses and your bills. All of this reflects the wisdom of a desire to glorify God with our finances. Planning means seeking to conform our decisions to what the Scriptures teach us.

The second area that we'll consider is cultivating marital unity in the sexual relationship. The Bible gives us frank and helpful instruction on this aspect of marriage. Now, biblical discretion and prudence are needed in addressing this area publicly within the church. Some people are sinfully crass and lack biblical dignity. Such discussions can be perverse and degrading, which is why Paul warns us not to even speak about evil, for example, "done in secret" in Ephesians 5:12. But on the other hand, some may be tempted to avoid this topic altogether, and that may lack biblical fidelity. Remember that the whole law, which contains material about intimate matters, was read before the whole congregation of men, women, and children in the Old Testament times. The same could be said about the rest of Scripture, including the Apostle Paul's epistles, which were read publicly to the whole congregation. Every generation needs everything that the Bible teaches. In the present day of extremes, God's people need a clear grasp of the biblical perspective on the sexual relationship in marriage. Now God's people will, of course, have different comfort levels about how much should be discussed in a setting like this course. So while attempting to maintain this biblical balance, I will seek to simply summarize the biblical teaching in this lecture, and we should begin first of all with the sanctity of marital intimacy.

This is, according to the Bible, a holy thing in a godly marriage. It is ordained and designed by God and actually glorifies and pleases Him when maintained within His prescribed parameters. You see this in the opening of the Bible in Genesis 2:24-25, 'A man is to leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife; and they two are to become one flesh.' In the New Testament, Hebrews 13:4 says that "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." And so this is something that is given by God, designed by God for the glorifying of God. In fact, God says that the view that forbids marital intimacy is actually a doctrine of demons. You'll read that in 1 Timothy 4:1 and 3, and you find an example of it in the Roman Catholic Church.

Everything connected to the sexual experience must be limited to the marriage relationship. That includes in our thoughts, in sight, in word, and in action. So we can go back to the ten commandments. The seventh commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." And then when you come to the New Testament, Jesus says in Matthew 5:27-30 that if you even look upon someone who is not your spouse lustfully, that you are guilty of committing adultery in your heart. And so, the marriage relationship provides the fence for our thoughts, our sight, our words, and our actions. And Proverbs has a lot to say about this in the early chapters. Go back and read, for example, Proverbs 2:16-19, and then 5:1-14 and 20-23, or 6:20 all the way through 7:27. Really those first seven chapters have a great deal to teach us about this biblical principle. In addition, all forms of sexual perversion transgress God's design, even within marriage, and are therefore unlawful. Self-control is what characterizes the courting relationship prior to marriage. For example, Scripture indicates that intimate caressing is clearly not lawful and should be limited to husbands and wives after marriage. One example of this would be Proverbs 5:17 and following.

In all of this, we need to remember that earthly marriage points to a heavenly marriage, and that means that earthly consummation of marriage is really just a precursor or a pointer to the heavenly consummation that we read about in Revelation 21. The climax of pleasure expressed in the conjugal relationship is merely a tiny signpost that points to the greater spiritual ecstasy of joy that awaits the believer in communion with God in heaven to come. The greatest delights in this world will pale in comparison to what the Lord has prepared for His people in glory. And this is why, for example, someone who is called to a life of singleness does not actually miss anything substantial in the long term because they will, if they're a believer, receive something far greater and far more bountiful in the glory of heaven and the joy and pleasure that is to be found in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. We also see in the book of the Song of Solomon, which is full of descriptions of conjugal love that further establishes the sanctity of marital intimacy, [that] the purpose of that book is to convey the story of the relationship between Christ and His church. The whole point of that book is a description of the relationship of Christ and the Christian, and yet the conjugal imagery that's used reinforces the sanctity of marital intimacy.

That brings us to considering unity in the sexual relationship. Physical intimacy should be a tangible expression of an inward reality. In other words, physical unity should be a manifestation of true personal spiritual unity in the marriage. This is, I think, what lies behind the words of Genesis 2 when you compare it with what Paul says in Ephesians 5. When a couple engages in sexual relations without unity in their relationship, they are in essence lying, whereas when true unity exists, then the sexual relationship has greater meaning and pleasure. In practice, this means a couple should resolve any outstanding conflicts before marital intimacy, rather than using it as a means to cover up disunity. Most problems in the sexual relationship, apart from perhaps potential physiological problems, are related actually to other areas of disunity within the marriage, rather than to intimacy itself. This is why conflicts must be biblically resolved in order to maintain the unity which is expressed in marital intimacy.

When you are first married, it is essential to establish patterns of open communication in this aspect of marriage. Before, during, and after sexual relations, a godly couple should discuss what is most meaningful to each other. This also leads us to consider what the Bible says about the blessings of the sexual relationship. The sexual relationship is a gift of God that is intended to bring pleasure to the Christian couple. In Proverbs 5:18-19, the word "satisfy" in verse 19 means "to satiate." Paul says that undue abstinence, except in special circumstances, should be avoided. It's worth our quoting from 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 on this; he says, "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." See, Paul says that the gift of regular marital intimacy is a practical way of resisting the devil even. For those who are married, our pent-up, unsatisfied desires provide occasion for undue temptation.

Consequently, frequency is mutually determined by both husband and wife, and determined by both husband and wife being willing to give to the other. At times, this could involve providentially-determined instances of necessary abstinence. Under normal circumstances, it will entail mutually agreed upon regularity because both spouses belong to each other. You'll note Paul's explicit instructions in the passage that we cited from 1 Corinthians 7:3-5. It is never a matter of taking or withholding; it is a matter of seeking to serve and even to outdo one another in giving what meets the other's needs. In Romans 12:10, we're told that love gives preference to one another, so the sexual relationship should not be one-sided or self-focused. Paul specifies that it is intended to bring blessing to both spouses in 1 Corinthians 7, so this is a special way of giving of oneself to your spouse. In practice, this means, for example, that a husband's sacrificial love will be manifest by his prioritizing and working to make intimate relations equally pleasurable for his wife and ensuring that her needs are being met in the process. Men and women are created differently, of course, and getting to know your spouse includes learning how those differences manifest themselves within the physical relationship.

It is important, as with the other topics that we have raised in these last two lectures, that you study further what the Bible has to say on this matter. Ignorance and misguided feelings hinder rather than help growth in this aspect of marriage. It should be an area where oneness and communication between spouses is pursued. It is a God-given, God-glorifying aspect of Christian marriage and, as with the other three areas that we have covered, I would encourage you to open your Bibles and study more fully what God says on this subject.

Well, in conclusion, this brings us to the end of this module or series of lectures, and we will end where we began. There is indeed hope for those who are tempted with hopelessness. For those who are struggling in marriage, you can take great hope. Why? Because God's Word is sufficient to address all of our problems, and God's grace is sufficient for all of our needs. His strength is even made evident, manifest, in our weakness. The believer's sin is, in fact, solvable. Where sin has abounded, grace abounds much more; Romans 5:20 tells us. God's Spirit can produce growth and change.

I realize that we all live very busy lives, but God has established the marriage relationship as a priority for Christian couples. Since a godly marriage has to be cultivated, and since priorities are what you do and not what you say, then there has to be a self-conscious decision to devote time and effort to these matters so that we're not only hearers of the Word but doers also.

These eight lectures have been filled with Scripture passages that you should review. Go through them with your spouse; look them up; read them. Discuss the ways in which these biblical principles need to be practically implemented in your specific marriage. Our ultimate goal, of course, is not happiness and bliss in marriage, though that is a precious by-product of gospel fruitfulness, but the chief end of marriage is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. And so may Christ be the One who has all of the preeminence in our marriage.