

Marriage (2)

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[0:00] As Christ intends it. And so we spent a good deal of time thinking about that and then just a little bit really thinking about husbands and wives and the difference in terms of their roles.

! One of headship and the other of submission. But we didn't think much really about application. Today we're thinking primarily about the application of what we heard last week. And we'll be extending that to singles as well. Because marriage is a big issue for all believers. If you're single, marriage is a big issue for you because you probably think about it quite a lot. And if you're not single, if you're married, then marriage is obviously a big issue because you are married. And so we're thinking about how the application of marriage extends to those who are single as well.

And to that end, we will be giving a bit of a nod really to 1 Corinthians chapter 7 where Paul speaks about singles. But what's important to say at the start now is that if you've forgotten what was said last week, then you need to get that back in mind.

[1:17] Okay? As we come to apply what we apply today. And we need to have that in mind and bear that in mind. What I will do is just reference some of what we thought about last week as well as we go forward.

So the first thing also to understand is marriage is actually a very controversial thing nowadays. I know we all know that. Okay? But marriage is, we could say it's under attack.

At least in society, it's been pretty much defeated as a biblical institution of God, isn't it? People have pretty much let go of any biblical images and realities about what marriage is.

That's kind of gone by the wayside. Although as churches, most at least, or many, continue to uphold marriage. And so marriage is under attack and it's a controversial thing.

Even within the church, it's controversial though. Because what Paul commands, what the Lord commands, that a husband is to be the head of his household, the head of his wife, and that the wife is to submit to her husband.

[2:27] I mean, that is radical even across churches. There are many churches that would say, well, no, that was just a cultural thing for them. And it's not for today.

But a couple of things to remember is, one of the things behind that is the culture of the day. So people say that because there's a lot of pressure from outside for the church to conform to the surrounding culture.

And to say a husband is the head of his wife, and to say that a wife should submit to her husband, is well out of step with what marriage and our culture is about.

Not just marriage, the view of men and women and all those things. That's one reason why it's under attack. Here's another reason. Well, because headship is often abused where it's practiced. It has been abused. Historically, when it was accepted, it was misapplied in all kinds of ways. And so people reject it. You know, it's like, surely Jesus and God wouldn't want this for relationships.

[3:32] And then another reason is that it's just misunderstood. People think that to be head means to be superior. To be in submission is a place of inferiority.

And even the church buys into that too often. And clearly, that is not the case. The Father sent the Son. Jesus submitted to his Father.

Right there in the Godhead, there is authority and submission. And that tells us that authority and submission has nothing at all to do with superiority and inferiority and greatness and those things.

It's about relationships and how that relationships function in a way that honours God. And if Jesus, who is Lord of the universe, would willingly and joyfully, humbly submit to his Father, then that shows us, doesn't it, that submission actually is a beautiful thing.

And if the Father, who is always being the Father, always has had authority over his Son for all eternity, he could do that without it ever being dominating or abusive or cruel or anything like that.

[4:51] And that tells us that authority is not intrinsically bad. It's not necessary to take advantage of authority. And so the Bible teaches us these things.

And so when Paul advocates, commands that a man be the head of his wife and the wife submit to the husband, what he is advocating is godly marriage, a beautiful marriage, a marriage that reflects something of Christ's amazing love for the church.

And we thought about Christ and we thought about some of that last week. But as I said, today we're thinking about some of the practicalities and applying them.

So we saw, for example, when Paul exhorts the woman to submit to her husband in everything, we saw that everything, that word, does not mean everything.

It doesn't. Okay? Now that needs qualification. To get us all on board with what I'm saying here, let me give you some examples.

[6:06] If a husband tells his wife to join him in some kind of internet scam, ripping off the older generation, should she submit to him in that?

No. A wife should not submit to her husband if that means him leading her into sin and rebellion against the Lord Jesus. Because a wife submits to her husband for the sake of Christ, not in rebellion against him.

And she will be held accountable for her actions before the Lord as well. On that day of judgment, it won't be enough to say, well, I did this because my husband told me to. And that she gets off.

No. She'll be accountable. So if the husband is leading the wife into sin, she must say no. That's an area where she wouldn't submit to him.

If her husband is leading her and asking her to lie for him, that would be something that she would have to say no.

[7:17] If a husband wants his wife to be a part of abusing their children, I'm sure we all agree.

For a wife to say, okay, I've got to submit to you, I'm going to join in this abuse. Of course the answer's got to be no. And so clearly the word everything doesn't mean absolutely everything. There are parameters. Parameters. And also, I want to suggest that everything does not include this as well. A wife submitting to a husband's abuse of her.

It doesn't include that. That doesn't glorify the Lord Jesus. But, we can say that, but at the same time, wives, those that will be wives, must not equivocate on that word everything.

In other words, we mustn't take those exceptions that I just talked about and then use that and say, everything doesn't mean everything, therefore I get to just pick and choose what I submit to. Okay, there are those, those things really should be obvious to us because if we know anything about the nature of Christ and the purpose of marriage and Christ's love for the church and the way that he's patient and all those things, then we know that those things just don't fit at all with the kind of marriage that God has in mind.

[8:52] And hopefully that would be reasonably obvious to us all. And if it's not, we need to be clear about that. But apart from those things, a wife should submit to her husband in everything.

In everything. Certainly everything that's good and right. and even when she may disagree with her husband and she may feel strongly about it, but still, a wife should submit to her husband if it's not abusive and those sorts of things.

Let me just say a practical thing also about where there's a situation of abuse and that kind of thing or where a husband is trying to coax his wife into joining him in some kind of crime, internet scams or whatever it might be, that is a time for elders to get involved.

That's the response. Not just submission. No. The elders need to be involved because church discipline needs to begin that process. So it's not that there's no answer.

There is. And incidentally, that also means this, that wives, if husbands are, with their headship, commanding you to keep these things secret, you don't have to do that.

[10:17] Bring it into the light. Okay? So, so everything doesn't mean everything when we think about those things, but apart from those things, it does mean everything.

You know? So it's a bit like, you know, in the workplace, you've got a job to do, your boss is, or your supervisor is going to be on site and your boss says, look, go to the site and just do whatever they tell you.

Well, you know what that means. That doesn't mean absolutely everything, does it? It says, well, do everything he says. That doesn't mean, you know, go and sell your home and give him all your money.

Obviously, it doesn't mean everything has parameters, but the context should set the parameters. Okay? So, so that's the first thing to say. And, that's for, for wives.

Husbands. The other thing that we saw about husbands is husbands are head of their wives, but, again, Paul does put parameters on.

[11:23] And, and it's an interesting thing to observe, and I'm not going to go over this because we talked about this last week, that, that the, the, the, the husband's parameters of headship is far more narrow than the wife's obligation to submit to a husband.

So, the wife submits in everything. The husband is head over the wife as Christ is the head over the church and it makes it very clear this is about for her flourishing as a godly woman.

And that can rightly be extended to the household. Okay? So that, now that does impact on everything, but what it means is the husband's primary concern for his wife, for his household, is that they grow to honour the Lord.

But, again, what, what wives can do is they can take that and think, so I don't need to submit to him and everything, only spiritual things. No, no, no, no. Submit to your husbands and everything.

But his primary concern as head, his number one priority is not that you have a lovely holiday every year. It's not that your children all get to wear Nike clothes or whatever.

[12:36] They're not his main priorities. The primary priority is that the family is raised in the Lord. That the wife flourishes as Christ as Christ serves the church, that the church might flourish.

Now, two, a couple of other practicalities that are helpful to understand is this. One of the struggles in the relationship between husband and wife is, or one of the challenges and problems is this.

Very often, the wife is far more competent than her husband, sometimes, in some cases, in just about everything.

And it's true, isn't it? That happens. Sometimes the wife is so much more competent than the husband, in just about every area. But competence doesn't really have anything to do with headship.

So, let's think, to think about it as some sort of practical scenarios. For example, if she is brilliant with the finances, she knows how to make the money work well in the family, she knows how to budget well and all that kind of stuff and he's hopeless.

[13:57] What does it mean for him to be the head in that situation? Well, Wayne Grudem, he put it like this, a good godly husband should have very big ears.

In other words, God's, as a husband, God has given him a wife with competencies and abilities that make up for his lack. And he needs to listen carefully and implement the wisdom, the godly wisdom of his wife.

And maybe he's so incompetent he can't even implement it. In which case, he can delegate that and tell his wife, that's good, you know what you're doing, then do it. But he has the authority to make decisions, hopefully listening carefully and doing what he can see is best for her flourishing in the Lord, for the glory of God in the family.

That's one example. When it comes to all sorts of other things, you can apply this to just about any area of life. Maybe she's far more of a theologian than he is.

And when it comes to reading the scriptures and sharing with the family, you know, he doesn't, he's not very good at that kind of thing. Well, he can read as a husband. More importantly, he can be, he should be the one that says, right, let's get together around the scriptures.

[15:26] It's his job to initiate that. And as they gather around the scriptures, he can ask one of the children to read. He can ask his wife, share your thoughts on this.

You know, he can initiate. When it comes to sort of plans for the future, a husband should be thinking, it shouldn't be left to the wife to be thinking about, you know, what are we going to do here and what are we going to do there?

The husband should be thinking about those things. Initiating conversations with his wife about the future. It shouldn't be left to her to be thinking and to be raising those issues.

The garden's a mess. It shouldn't just be left to her to have to finally sort it out or nag her husband to finally get on top of it or whatever it might be. Take initiative. And taking initiative is essentially what it is to lead, isn't it?

Take an initiative. Get in as much wisdom as you can from your spouse, from others even and then taking the initiative to lead on those things.

[16:33] So it's not really about competency. If a husband is incompetent in all sorts of areas and a wife is highly competent, well thank the Lord because as a couple you have the competency that's required and God's given that without undermining leadership.

and for wives, here's the other side of that. If that's the situation you know you're far more competent than your husband. What does Paul say that second to last statement that he makes? Wives, respect your husbands. Maybe God's given you competencies which I'm sure he has but respecting your husband means not trying to undermine his leadership.

If you want to know your husband's been listening carefully to support the decision that he makes and even if you disagree with it to support it.

He's not being ungodly in doing what he believes is best so support him. An attitude that says okay I disagree but we'll make the very most of this.

[17:45] I'll support this and do my best. And if it doesn't work out don't kind of it's not about one upmanship if it doesn't work out then hopefully he'll learn.

He's far more likely to learn and be humble with your support than feeling undermined. So these are basic practical applications of the stuff that we learned last week.

The most important thing and the kind of overarching thing for all of this before we come to think about singles is this values are values.

So what do I mean by that? Well what I mean is this to establish together that it's the gospel that should shape every decision that you make?

That the value for the couple is the honour and glory of the Lord. What's going to honour him most? Because that means that when it comes to making decisions you see if there's conflict and it's not about necessarily or may look like it's to do with competency but actually it might be that the husband's values are different to the wives.

[19:07] But if the gospel shapes things then there's more likely to be unity if you're both gospel minded.

And again this is why Paul begins by saying out of reverence for Christ. Without that unity and peace is much harder.

And I'll just give one example of this. When it comes to the family holiday maybe the budget allows for six weeks in Hawaii and the husband is like yeah let's go for six weeks in Hawaii and the wife is saying I know the budget allows for it but surely that's not right because we could use a lot of that money for the extension of the kingdom.

And hopefully she'll persuade him in that. That will be a time when you hope that he sees sense. If he's gospel minded and reminded that we're not about lovely long holidays we're about the gospel then that value will help them come to unity.

And the same would be the other way around as well. If she's like we've got the budget for a six week holiday in Hawaii why not? Well the gospel is why not.

[20:26] And I'm not saying that people shouldn't have a six week holiday but the gospel should be the determining factor.

Okay so there's some practical applications there. Now thinking about singles we've been thinking about marriage what has marriage got to do with you if you're single? Well do you know there's

some really important things that extend to singles okay if you're single there's some really important things that extend to singles actually before I talk about that there's one more thing I do need to say which is the most important application of all okay this is something for you married couples that I want to encourage you to do very practically when you get home this afternoon or if not this afternoon soon after it may be that your headship and submission relationship really hasn't been functioning at all it may be that you've even given up on it at a practical level and in that case here's what you need to do you need to go home and you need to come before the Lord and you need to confess and repent in front of the

Lord Jesus you need to do that okay it's not good to just listen to a message like this and think okay I ought to put it into practice and then we end up forgetting to actually repent if the relationship hasn't been glorifying and honouring to God and wives if you've not been submitting to your husband if you've been it's been a battle for control if that's what you've been engaged in with your husband manipulating or trying to control or whatever it might be you need to recognise that in yourself as well and go home and repent in front of the Lord confess and repent in front of the Lord so that's the first thing for you to do that you should do this afternoon here's the second thing husbands you need to speak with your wives actually speak to them and say we need to spend a bit of time together to talk about this that's a husband taking initiative right so wives how do you respond to that you be compliant okay do that arrange a time and then that's the second thing the third thing that you need to do husbands when you have that talk with your wife if you've had to repent in front of the

Lord maybe you need to confess and repent in front of your wife too and say I've been wrong the way that I've been I can see that and I'm sorry and wives if you've had to confess and repent in front of the Lord it may well be quite likely that you need to do the same with your husbands husbands take the initiative on this and then the third thing is this or is it the fourth thing fourth thing thank you the fourth thing is this husbands commit verbally to your wife that you will be a godly head that you will make decisions that are most going to glorify the Lord and be for her spiritual flourishing and for the good of the family and not for your own selfish game not for your own selfish preferences and wives these are the two hard bits wives commit verbally to your husband and say

I will submit to you in everything I'm going to I'm trusting that you're going to be godly and I'm going to submit to you in everything isn't that a scary thing it should be right understanding both of you that you're both sinful knowing that you're going to get it right but being committed to it nevertheless you know the really important things for marriage are grace aren't they grace forgiveness repentance and trust really important things you have to work on those things so singles okay I've got sorry singles we haven't got a lot of time for this but if marriage if the template for marriage is Christ's love for the church and Christ's relationship with the church then there is some of that to apply to singles but another template as it were is the father and the son right the father sent the son the son is in eternal submission to the father and the father sent the son and Jesus came on a mission and in coming on a mission what did he do?

[25:32] he sacrificed the comfort the glory the wonder the joy of heaven and the worship of all the angels and all the redeemed so far who are there with him in glory he sacrificed that to come into this world in obedience humble obedience to his father and Jesus served as a single man didn't he all of his life until the ultimate sacrifice when he died on the cross for all of us he's not the only person to have lived a single life who's godly and great I mean it doesn't get any better than Jesus right but the apostle Paul a single man wasn't he and probably after Jesus the apostle Paul is the most used person by God who's ever lived on planet earth I mean that's arguable you might say Moses or whatever but the apostle Paul is certainly up there right and the apostle

Paul he lived his life why for the sake of the gospel so for those of us that are single here's what we can do here's what you can do and what often is the case obsessing over marriage will I ever get married am I ever going to meet someone and we can think about it all the time and pray about it and be looking for you know who might be your partner and that leads also to worry and anxiety over it and heightens a sense of loneliness here's the thing none of that is going to get you a wife or a husband okay none of that's going to do that yet the Lord knows already if you're going to meet someone he's got that in hand he's got that in hand and none of that worry and anxiety does

anything good here's what it will do when you finally meet your spouse and get married if you do you'll look back and think why did

I spend all those years anxiously worrying God has got purposes for you this is where we come to 1 Corinthians we're not going to read it all but Paul's advice and it is his advice is very helpful he says now about virgins I have no command from the Lord but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy because of the present crisis I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is I'll just drop down a little bit I'll read verse 27 as well are you pledged to a woman do not seek to be released are you free from such a commitment look at what it says do not look for a wife don't spend your days looking for a wife or a husband but if you do marry you have not sinned and if a virgin marries she has not sinned but those who marry will face many troubles in this life and I want to spare you this and then verse 32

I would like you to be free from concern an unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs how can he please the Lord but a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world how can he please his wife and his interests are divided an unmarried woman or a virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs what Paul is saying there is if you're single don't worry about marriage it's good to be married it's good to want to be married and marriage is a wonderful thing but it will come when the time is right the Lord is able to bring people together we can trust him on that and I'm not saying don't keep an eye open for that but don't worry about it and here's what you need to do if you've been worrying and anxious about it you need to do exactly what husbands and wives need to do trust the

Lord perhaps you need to go home this afternoon and confess that you've been obsessing in fear no faith about marriage confess and repent and here's what you can do and what you should do devote yourself to the Lord in a way that you will not be able to do if and when you get married don't waste the time that you've got that you can invest in the kingdom because once you marry if you marry you are never you're not going to get that back again so make the most of the opportunity it does come down to this doesn't it do I trust the Lord put your trust in him let go put your trust in him and serve him with all of your heart let's pray father we thank you for the glorious picture of [31:24] Christ and his love for the church and the way that he served the church the way that he exalts the church that the church might glorify and exalt him and we thank you Lord that marriage is built on that template to reflect that Lord and I pray that you'll help all of us myself included to to display your love for your people in our marriages help us to do that and I pray also father for those of us that are unmarried Lord I do pray that you would grant faith and a depth of confession and repentance and a whole hearted giving of self to you selflessly just as you

Lord Jesus came selflessly Lord we ask these things for your honour in Jesus name Amen