

Christian Counter-Culture: Wives and Husbands

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Date: 29 November 2020

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[0 : 00] Father, sometimes your word says things which go so against our culture, it's hard for us to even feel comfortable talking about your word.

And so, Father, sometimes when your word seems to go against what our culture considers wise, we don't trust your wisdom. And we also know, Father, that many sinful people have taken your word and twisted it to their own power and their own advantage.

And we confess before you, Father, that there is a part in us, that it's not just other people, but there is a part within each one of us that likes to twist your word for our own power, our own advantage.

We ask, Father, that you would do a mighty but gentle work in each of our hearts and minds this morning, that the Holy Spirit would come with might and power and deep conviction that you would grip us with the gospel, with who Jesus is and what he did for us so that by faith in him we can be made right with you, all out of love, all out of love.

And so, Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would so bring the gospel home to us, that our hearts are quiet and trusting, that we might understand your word and learn to live it.

[1 : 22] And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So, here's what the Bible says.

Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. In any lesson about how to preach, they always say that it's best to get something that grabs people's attention right from the beginning.

Usually, it doesn't mean reading the Bible right away. Those of you who are watching who aren't Christians, that doesn't usually grip Christians' hearts right away, reading the Bible. But saying, wives, submit to your husbands, that qualifies as a very good way to grip people's attention right from the beginning.

So, that's what the Bible says. Why are we even reading this? One of the things that we do at this church is that we preach through books of the Bible, as a general rule.

Not all the time, not 52 weeks a year. Our Christmas sermons will be about particular texts of the Bible, but we preach through books of the Bible. And one of the reasons that we, there's several reasons we preach through books of the Bible.

[2 : 39] First of all, everything in the Bible was written as a book. So, when you preach through the Bible as a book, you're actually reading it in the way that it was first heard, the way that God, in a sense, and the authors intended it to be read and to be understood.

And by doing this, it's also the way, then, that's most helpful for Christians. It means that we're allowing the Bible to set the agenda for us as Christians. We're looking at things that we might not normally look at.

I can tell you, I am very, very, very, very, very Canadian. And in my Canadian bones, I would not read this text in church and preach on it. I'm just going to be very honest with you.

In fact, I'll also say that for many years, I wouldn't have preached on a text like this. I would have found some way to dodge around it. That's not something I'm boasting about. It's something that I'm confessing.

But it's actually, in fact, the most helpful way for Christians to grow and learn is by reading through the book. And we look at things that I would not normally pick and that we wouldn't normally pick, maybe as a congregation.

[3 : 38] It's also the most helpful way for non-Christians who are trying to figure out the Christian faith. It'd be very easy if you went to a church that only preached on, well, whatever the church happened to think was important to preach on.

And there'd be this whole realm of things which are uncomfortable topics, inconvenient aspects of the Christian faith, and that you would be left in the dark on, and then maybe even bothered very much if down the road you discovered that if you're to be a Christian, you're supposed to believe it. By reading through books of the Bible, we come upon these inconvenient texts from a Canadian perspective. So, we're going to be looking, of course, at other verses, but once again it says this, Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Now, many people who are watching, or many of you who are here, probably have certain types of things that go through your mind. George, don't you know that this text is very offensive? Yes, I do know that it's very offensive to most Canadians, including maybe the majority of Canadian Christians. Don't you know, George, that there's this thing called wife abuse?

[4 : 44] And don't you think a text like this will just give power, empower abusers? I do know that there's wife abuse. I mean, I know that there's wife abuse.

I don't think this text empowers abusers, but I know that there is wife abuse. George, don't you think this text is offensive to Canadians because it denies the idea of men and women being equal? Don't you think you should empower women rather than disempowering them? Don't you think, George, that marriages would be worse if this was followed? And once again, George, don't you think this would legitimize and empower abuse?

I'm aware that these are all the types of questions that Canadians, including Canadian Christians, have when they hear this text. So let's walk towards the text and see what's there and why it's there, and let's try to have a conversation about it.

But before we get any further into actually looking at the text, I want you to grant me some mercy. And this isn't a gotcha moment. I'm not trying to getcha, have a smile, I gotcha.

[5 : 51] But let's just be honest that when we talk about texts like this, where the wife is asked to submit and the husband is asked to love, the obvious question is why aren't husbands asked to submit and wives asked to love?

Or why don't both submit and why don't both love? Why is it that this text seems to be picking on women and giving men a pass? They get to just love.

Women have to submit. So why is it different? Doesn't this undermine equality? Just before we get any further in the text, let's just acknowledge that Canadians are...

Our culture empowers us to believe contradictory things at the same time without realizing that they're contradictory. This is what I just want you to give me a bit of mercy about.

But I would suggest that our culture regularly allows us to hold three contradictory beliefs in our heads at all times without ever thinking that they're contradictory, but they are contradictory.

[6 : 51] And any time that I've had a conversation with us, at any depth in a coffee place or some other place about this text, often what happens is people go from one contradictory objection to another without ever having the self-knowledge that the ideas, in fact, are very contradictory.

Well, what are these three contradictory beliefs? The three contradictory beliefs is that women and men are fundamentally equal. In fact, it used to be said, an old feminist slogan, that men and women are the same.

The only thing that was different is the plumbing. But they're fundamentally the same. Then people will go to another idea, which would basically be that one of the problems is that we don't have enough women in particular positions.

And why do we need women in particular positions? Well, because there's things that women bring to organizations and leadership that men don't bring. In other words, that women, in fact, and men are fundamentally different.

And then you can have another go talking, trying to deal with another thing, trying to deal with this for a couple of minutes, and all of a sudden they'll tell you, but by the way, don't you realize that men and women are just a... Male and female, men and women, is just a social construct.

[7 : 53] Now, once again, this isn't a gotcha moment. This is just... It's very hard to have a conversation about a text like this when we're dealing with people holding three contradictory ideas in their head at the same time without any realization whatsoever that they're contradictory.

Because really, you can't say all those three things at the same time. You have to choose one of those three. Fundamentally, you have to choose. If, in fact, men and women are fundamentally the same, then, in a sense, you have to say, it doesn't matter whether there's women in boardrooms.

But if, in fact, you think that it's important to have women in boardrooms as well as men because of the differences they bring, then that first belief doesn't work. And none of them make any sense if all you're going to say is that male and female, men and being a man and being a woman is just a social construct.

Well, then, none of that stuff makes sense. Like, how can we even have a conversation? You have to choose. If it's just a construct, well, then, why do we need more women in a position or more men in a position? Or why are they equal if it's just a...

Like, you've got to choose. You've got to choose. So I guess I'm just asking, if you just pause for a second and realize that rather than Canada and the wisdom of Canada, in fact, being wise, that at a fundamental level it's incoherent.

[9 : 12] Now, I'm not saying it's not incoherent amongst some of the leading thinkers who might be very, very laser-focused on particular ideas, but for the average Canadian, the problem we come with the text is that we have an unconscious, not an unconscious bias, but an unconscious confusion.

And because of our unconscious confusion, we can't actually begin to listen to the text. And just before we go any further, I just want to say, in terms of those three confusions, and I'd have to do several sermons on each of them, I'm just going to make the particular claim, that there is no ideology, no religion in the world that gives a stronger basis for the equality of men and women than the Christian faith.

Absolutely none. The Bible roots the equality of men and women in its very story of creation. Evolution doesn't give that.

Secular evolutionary, neo-Darwinian doesn't give that. Neither does Hinduism, neither does Buddhism, neither does Islam. And given that neo-evolutionary theory is the basis of secularism and Marxism and other types of things, it gives no basis for the fundamental equality of women as the way that the Bible does.

The Bible is the source of all secular belief of the equality of men and women, whether it's recognized or not. I make no apologies for it.

[10 : 39] In fact, it is the case. The Bible also shows, it would also claim very wisely that male and female are created biological realities and that there is an effect.

The Bible is very, very wise if you read it from the beginning to the end. It doesn't hold up a picture of masculinity. It doesn't hold up a picture of femininity. It very wisely says that in fact there is something about being biologically male that is connected to what it means to be a man and there is something about being biologically female which is connected to what it means to be a woman but there is a lot of flexibility in what that precisely means.

A lot of room for cultural context but it maintains that in fact there is a difference. In fact, one of the problems that people have with the Bible text is that this and you can see it here in the text, I'm using a big word, it's called asymmetric commands, asymmetric commands is that when it comes to the husband and wife and other types of roles in the Bible, there's this regular asymmetric command.

It even goes back to the creation story where the husband has certain commands and the wife has certain commands and they're not the same, they're different. The Bible acknowledges that there is this creational reality that will work itself out in certain ways but it doesn't dictate what it means to be masculine, what it means to be feminine.

And for those of us who are watching and those of us who are here, if you are one of many, many Canadians who feel not at home in your body, that your body is somehow wrong to who you are, the Bible only has compassion for you and Christians should only have compassion for you.

[12 : 22] That must be so hard to feel as if you were in the completely wrong body and all I can say is that Jesus loves you and that he desires you to learn his yoke so that you can walk with him as your Savior and Lord as you deal with how hard it must be, how hard it must be to feel not at home in your own body.

But the Bible will always, healing will always be in the direction towards being at home in your body. That's always the direction the healing will be. And I, so I think the Bible in fact is very wise in general, but what about this particular text?

George? Okay, you're going to give us a bit of a moment. You've said, we're going to let, George, you've asked that some mercy could be shown to you because in fact Canadians are a bit confused about what it actually means to think about men and women.

So what does the Bible say? What does it actually say? Well, before we get into what the Bible says, there's two other things we need to deal with. The first one is that, and here I might be offending some of you, and I might be offending some of you who are watching this online. I take no delight in offending people. But many, many Canadian and Western Christians, very, very well-meaning, go in very, very wrong directions about trying to read this text.

[13:51] Intentions are very good, but in fact, what is ended up suggesting is not at all what the Bible teaches and isn't really in keeping with the Christian faith, isn't in keeping with the Bible. First of all, people might say, is there something in the Greek, the original language, which softens the blow of the text?

In fact, there isn't anything in this particular text that softens it. Submit is a very, very good word. It has a non, I'll talk about it in a moment, it has a military and a non-military usage.

And I can say that one of the problems of Christian interpreters is that there are many Christian interpreters making an opposite error. There are a minority in the Christian church in Canada, but there are many Christian interpreters who interpret the word submit in its military context as if it applies to wives, not in its non-military usage.

So they, in fact, create, I've now offended a whole pile of certain type of tradition by saying that, but that's, in fact, the case. Why on earth would you think that a wife and a husband is a military context?

Like, that doesn't make sense. Maybe I'll get some angry emails over this. But the more common one is, there's no particular help in the Greek, the more common things is to say that a text like this is culturally limited.

[15:10] That it applied in Colossians, but it doesn't necessarily apply today. And all I would say is if you take that as your way of reading the Bible, nothing in the Bible, you might as well just throw the Bible right out the window and out of the garbage.

Why then pick this particular text? Why not talk about Jesus rising from the dead or him being the firstborn of all creation or the firstborn?

Like, why pick anything and say, okay, that stuff is universal, but this is, like, there's no reason to read the text and say this is culturally limited. There's absolutely no reason to read it. That's just something that we throw in.

And some people will say, and this is correct, but they draw a wrong conclusion from it. They will say that, well, you have a text like this and given the culture of Rome at the time this was written, this was a very, very radical text because in the household codes, and this is called the household code and the household codes in the time that the Bible was written, in fact, the household code would only talk to the man.

It wouldn't talk about children or slaves or wives or anything like that. The basically, would have been good to be a man back then, I'm just joking, it wouldn't be. The man was the dictator.

[16:24] He was the dictator of the wife, the dictator of the children, and the dictator of the slaves, and they just had to salute. And so people will say, well, you know, it's not a very good text for today, but back in its day it was quite radical.

And then if you see the trajectory, but the problem was with all trajectory arguments, that's just another way of saying that we don't have to pay any attention to the text. Because even if it looks good within that context back then, it still sucks today.

And to merely say that it's pointing in the direction of today, in terms of our secular wisdom, then it's not leaving us very far ahead. That's been a long introduction to the text. So George, what on earth is the text saying?

Well, the text, all texts in the Bible are always addressing part of human experience and human problems. If I was preaching this in a text, a country that had arranged marriages, it would be speaking very directly into that problem, the problems that go with arranged marriages.

If I was speaking in a culture where there was polygamy, it would speak very directly into cultural issues connected to that. In our day, I would say that in Canada right now, and this is maybe a general human problem, but it's a special problem in Canada, is that we tend to think of marriage in terms of love and in terms of power without realizing that the two, the way we frame the discussions about marriage in our culture are fundamentally contradictory.

[17:58] Because, you see, you can't have power in love, at least not very simply. Part of what love means is to surrender your power. But if we want to enter into marriage as a way to empower us and maintain our power, and yet love calls us to surrender our power, it means that the very

heart of all modern advice about marriage is a fundamental contradiction.

How is it that I am to love, which is what I really want, and to be loved, and have to surrender my power? Because that's what you have to do with love, isn't it?

It's a type of self-effacing. You don't think about yourself, you're thinking about the other. You're not thinking about your rights, you're thinking about the other. You're not reveling in your power. That's just a type of abuse.

You're reveling in this mutual type of love and of giving of yourself, and that's what we want, that's what we desire, yet at the same time to do that always means giving up power.

And whenever things start to go wrong in a marriage, often what happens is we don't think of in Canada going toward deeper into love, we immediately start to think about power and how to protect ourselves.

[19 : 14] So how is it that this text might speak wisdom into the human problems and the human experiences that we have today? In fact, I'm going to say that Christians should meditate upon this text, believe this text, and it's part of the oldest sexual revolution, the perennial sexual revolution that comes from the Bible, which is in fact always wiser than the culture's wisdom about marriage and about sexuality.

So let's look at the text again. Now I'm going to begin by reading at verse 17. I think the text should be up there in the Bible. And this, by the way, isn't just an arbitrary thing, there's a grammatic reason.

At the original language, there's a grammatical reason that verse 17 in fact is connected grammatically and by grammar with verses 18, 19, 20, 21, and all the verses that follow.

And what I'm going to suggest is that if you understand that even though like in my Bible, and these things like little headings, rules for Christian households, and all of that type of stuff, that's added by translators to help you understand it.

But in an odd way, it actually makes it harder when you put something like rules for Christian households as if you have this topic that ends at verse 17 and now you begin a completely new topic.

[20 : 34] The way to understand the text, I think, grammatically, is to understand that verse 17 is both a text that's bringing all of the stuff that's gone before into a big conclusion, and whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

That's bringing everything that went through to conclusion, bringing it to a real sharp focus, that once you commit to allowing God to be the one to grow you rather than growing yourself, that God has to grow you, God has to be the one to fit you for heaven, that you set your mind in Christ in all his risen, sovereign, Trinitarian glory, that you put off pride, and anger, and love, and envy, and greed, and gluttony, and lust.

You put all those things off. You put on humility, meekness, love, gentleness, faithfulness, you put these things on, you let Christ, you give him permission to rule in your heart, to speak into your heart, and then it comes to this wonderful phrase, and whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

And that's not just the culmination of what's gone before, it is also the marching orders for everything that goes on next. It's the marching orders for everything that goes on next.

So it's as if God speaking through his word has said, okay, George, whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

[22 : 08] Louise, whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Owen and Shannon, for each of you, whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

And we can go all the way through all of the different married couples who are part of the congregation. And that's the fundamental marching orders. The fundamental marching orders. And then in verse 18, and this sometimes troubles people at the level of the grammar of the original language when it says wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting to the Lord.

The way the word wives is used is in the grammatic construction, the original language. It implies they're inferior. But the Bible is so funny.

God is a trickster. Because this could really bother you. But then you read the next phrase, husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. And at the level of the grammar, husbands are described in an inferior position.

[23 : 12] Both of them described equally as inferior positions. positions. Why are they both in inferior positions? Because all the way through the text, there's only one Lord. If your quest is for power, there's only one Lord.

And who is it? It's not the husband. It's not the wife. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the only Lord in the entire text. And so relative to my wife, we are both in inferior positions relative to Jesus who died because he loved us so much.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to the end that all who believe in him will not perish but have everlasting life. So that's the first thing. The second thing in it is that it says, is the word, it's very, very interesting, that it says for wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting to the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents and everything for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children or basically the word there is to make them embittered or to discourage them, to break their hearts, break their wills. Given that parents, and by the way, the other thing which is very neat here is that really the word father should be translated as parents. There's a bit of a grammatical argument for it, but in fact the word should be translated as mother and father.

[24 : 41] And it's very interesting that the contrast is that one of the, and I'll talk about it more, I'm not going to talk about parents and children very much in this sermon because of the big issue of husbands and wives, but children are given the task or the quest to obey, and parents who get to in a sense provide orders to them are given the warning that it's possible for them to do this in such a way that it breaks their spirit.

It breaks them. And we have seen parents who are so harsh, all of us know parents who are so harsh with their children that it's broken them. It's broken them.

And this is when it says don't be harsh, it's saying children are to obey, but gosh, really be careful with this because you could break, you could break their spirit.

That's not the right thing. Now here's the missing piece in the text. In a non-military sense, in a military sense, the word submission would be very similar to the word obey.

This is obviously not in a military case. And in a military case, the submission means a voluntary attitude of giving in, of cooperating with the one who's in a sense in authority.

[25 : 59] It's also, it can be used to carry a burden. And some of you might say, if you knew my husband, to submit to him would be like carrying a burden. Sort of an interesting thing.

But here's the primary mystery in the text. And Andrew, if you could put up the first point, that would be very handy. The Lord gives the wife the quest to submit to her husband, but the husband is not given the power to command.

The Lord gives the husband the quest to self-eating self-effacingly love his wife. But the wife is not given the power to demand.

I'm going to say it again. It's on the screen. This is part of the great mystery of the text. The Lord gives the wife the quest, not the duty, not the task, not the job, but the quest.

Why do I say the quest? Well, because what does verse 17 say? We have this great quest. The great quest is that in verse 17, whatever I do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

[27 : 18] This is this great quest. I'm on this great quest that I can do everything in the name of Jesus so that he will be seen as great, that he will be glorified, that the world will want to know him, that people will want to praise him.

That's this great quest, that he will have the supremacy in all things. It's a great quest. The Lord gives the wife the quest to submit to her husband, but the husband is not given the power to command the wife.

In fact, look at the text very carefully. First of all, it's using the word submit, not obey. Paul could have used the word obey if that's what he meant, but he doesn't use the word obey, he uses the word submit, which is a voluntary word. And he uses it, and you'd think, and I've used those of you who have heard me on talk on related texts like this, you know, in a sense, you know, Jenny, who's the admin person, you know, in Canadian law and everything like that, I can tell her to do certain

things and she has to do it.

If she stopped doing things I asked her to do that were within the normal legal rights, we could fire her. And so, when you see the language here of the wife submitting to the husband, you would expect then that there would be some type of description given to the husband about how it is that he can order his wife or the type of commands that he could give her or what's in bounds and out of bounds.

But in fact, it's not there. When it comes time to speak to the husband, it's as if God forgets that he's just given the wife a task to submit and God gives a completely different command to the husband and it has nothing to do with being able to order his wife.

[29 : 00] You see, here's the problem. Because this makes no sense to the world and we're part of the world, we add things to the text about the husband's ability to make certain types of orders.

We have books that describe what he can and cannot do or what the wife has to do and doesn't have to do, but the text doesn't say any of these things. The fact of the matter is that the Lord gives the wife the quest to submit to her husband, but the husband is not given the power to command. And the Lord gives the husband the quest to self-effacingly love his wife, but the wife is not given the power to demand. And the word here, which is used for love, I've tried to give it in my point as self-effacingly loving.

So it's not the word for romance, it's not the word for eros, in other words, as long as the husband gets to just sexually know his wife and she has to submit to him, that's not what the text is saying. It's not saying the husband gets to be all romantic, but the wife has to submit. No, it's not talking about that at all, but there's lots of different words for love in the original language, well there's four, and this one here is very clear, it's the word agape, and it's a type of word for self-effacing love.

[30 : 18] In other words, it's the type of love which is consumed by thinking about the other.

Self-effacing means you're not thinking about yourself, you're thinking about the other, and you're thinking about the other for their true good.

Affection can come into it, emotions might or might not come into it. Like a perfect example of self-effacing love is the parent who has a baby that starts waking up and screaming at three in the morning, or the toddler nine months or a year old and they have to go to the bathroom or something like that.

You might feel absolutely zero affection for your child at that moment. In fact, zero might be a high mark. Your affectionate feelings for the child at that moment are probably negative.

But you don't say, well, you know, self-effacing means you think about the needs of the child. I mean, you're also in a sense thinking about yourself so you can get back to sleep, but you're thinking of the needs of the child.

You get up and you love the child, thinking primarily of them, dealing with the poopy bum or the wet diaper or whatever it is, or the night fears or tremors or whatever it is.

[31 : 29] You self-effacingly love. And that's what's going on here in the text. Remember I said that the human problem we have is how do we balance this need for power and yet at the same time the need that at the very heart of all things there's this aspect of surrender.

And one of the things that the Bible does here very, very wisely is it puts the same God. See, the interesting thing here about this is that the God who's giving this command from all eternity, the Father has loved the Son.

You're going to get being bored with me saying these things. Of the Son from all eternity having loved the Father. Of the Holy Spirit being the love that goes from the Father to the Son as well as the Holy Spirit being a person himself.

In a sense, the Son is perennially submitting to the Father's will while the Father is perennially pouring himself out for his Son and revealing himself to the Son and giving of himself to the Son as the Son gives of himself to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

It's this constant move of love and delight and of giving and that's the story of the whole universe. That's what is out of that being, that triune God that the universe has come into existence.

[32 : 36] It is for that reality, it is from that reality that when we fell, when we chose to think that we were greater than God, that we wanted to be the center, that we wanted to be the power, we wanted to be the arbiter of right and wrong, that the world had to revolve around ourselves and creation gets broken when Adam and Eve enters into this understanding and God in love sends his Son.

The Son submits to the Father by saying, yes, I will set aside my divine prerogatives, I will set aside my appearance as God, I will set aside all of those things out of obedience to you and out of love for human beings, I will set all my prerogatives aside and out of love for human beings, I will descend into the womb of the Virgin Mary, the weakest of the weakest of the weakest of the weakest to be a zygote connected to Mary's womb.

I will enter the human race like that so that I can do that great act to save them that they cannot do for themselves. I will submit to Roman imperial authority, I will submit to the authority of my parents only without sin, I will live a normal lower working class life only without sin, I will suffer the trials and temptations that human beings suffer only without sin, I will do it all out of obedience and submission to my Father and out of love for human beings, and I will become even poorer than poor by taking upon myself all of the wrongdoing that human beings have done, I will be their sacrifice for sin, I will take that upon myself, I will do that out of submission to my Father and out of love for human beings, and I will die the death that they deserve and that will be their doom, I will take their doom upon myself out of submission to my Father and love for human beings.

And when we put our faith and trust in Christ, he is doing all of that so that the end of every single one of our stories who have put our faith and trust in Jesus, the end of our stories, well that we can be in the presence in the midst of the Father loving the Son and the Son loving the Father and the Holy Spirit is the love itself, we will be in the very middle of that reality.

And when that day comes, we will say, my chains are gone, my heart is free.

[35 : 07] We will say, free at last, free at last. Praise God Almighty, I'm free at last.

Because God who designed you and me to be in the midst of that reality from all eternity without embarrassment, without shame, but with great affection and delight and to be filled by that, everything that God is doing is to prepare us for that day.

If you could put up the second point, Andrew, I'm going to ask you to toggle back to the first one in a moment.

Together the husband and wife illuminate how God saves us in Jesus. Do you notice that? The Son's submission to the Father, the Son's love for you and me.

That's part of the great quest for the husband and the wife is how can I so live with? Louise is vastly better than I am. She's not perfect, just like I'm vastly more imperfect than her.

[36 : 13] Every marriage has to figure out how to solve and how to survive the sinfulness of your own heart and the sinfulness of the other. And there's this great quest of how can I so live with Louise and how can she so live with me?

That how God saves human beings is illuminated to our children. To the church and to the world. It's a great quest.

Now because the wife embarks on this quest at the command of Jesus, who's given her this task. And because the husband embarks on this quest at the command of Jesus, who gives him this text. It means, and because the husband isn't given the power to command his wife and the wife isn't given the power to demand of her husband. It means that both the husband and the wife need to have very serious regular conversations, not only with each other, but more importantly with Jesus. And the shape of the other will determine the shape of what that submission looks like. And this text nowhere that forbids, I mean, if the husband or the wife commits adultery, there might be the possibility of the marriage coming to the end if there's abuse that has to be dealt with.

[37 : 36] This text doesn't tell the wife to submit to any type of abuse. Why? Remember, she's submitting, but she's doing it for Jesus' sake, to show his glory and submitting to abuse doesn't illuminate how Jesus came to save us.

He was meek, but not weak. Meekness requires strength. People who are weak can't really be gentle.

Those of us who are strong need to learn to be gentle. And so when you have a very, very, very bad husband, the shape of what that quest for submission will look like will be very, very, very, very, very different than a husband who's trying to embody this self-effacing love.

That's why, you see, the text isn't absolute. I mean, it's absolute on one level, but it's not absolute in terms of what the other person is like. This quest of what it would mean to submit and this quest of what it means to self-effacingly love is going to be shaped by the life of the other.

But it's still the quest that I'm to embark on as a husband. And those of you who are wives, husbands have the same quest, and those of you who are wives have the same quest of submission.

[38 : 50] The beauty of this text is that it is all part of this wonderful story where the end is that you embark on this quest, not just by yourself.

That's why verse 17 is so important. Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. You do it in Jesus, with Jesus, for his glory, within the limits that he is going to set, not your husband, not your wife, the limits that he will set.

To have this great task of illuminating how God saves us in the person of Jesus, knowing that when we put ourselves in a posture of attempting to obey this text for the glory of God, that God in his grace will do this work of transformation in us.

Even if part of what it means to lovingly submit to your husband means to say you have to stop the abuse. The text doesn't say you never say that, right?

Because it's voluntary. It's done in the honor of Christ. It's done in a way to illuminate Christ. It's done in keeping with the end of the story. And it's a posture whereby to the best that you can figure out in this particular mess, that the way forward in the way of this mess isn't necessarily to cling to your power, but to cling to Jesus and the task that he's given you within the limits of how your life is working out, which can be talked about in the context of a congregation committed to the word, but hopefully wisely, that you put yourself in this position where God's grace can work.

[40 : 45] That's the quest, to put yourself in a position where God's grace can work. Please stand. Andrew, could you put up the first slide again for me, please?

The Lord gives the wife the quest to submit to her husband, but the husband is not given the power to command. The Lord gives the husband the quest to self-effacingly love his wife, but the wife is not given the power to demand.

Why is it that God organized it this way rather than another? I am the vaguest idea in the world. Nobody does. But that's how he's put it. We know he's good and wise.

We know he only loves us. We know he's preparing us for an eternity with him. And it is part of this whole mystery, this whole mystery that somehow a husband and wife, sinners though they are, but under the lordship of Christ, knowing that he is their savior, that there might be this means by which somehow or another through this living these quests, that people can look at them and have some sense of what it means that Jesus came to die on the cross to save us.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, this text goes against the grain for how we normally think. And Father, we know that you don't deny us means of police or jobs or protections, and you don't deny us to use those things when they are necessary.

[42 : 23] And sometimes in marriages, they really are necessary and need to be taken. But we give you thanks and praise, Father, that for those of us who are called to the holiest state of matrimony, that you are the savior and the lord of our marriages, just as you are the savior and the lord of each of our lives.

And we give you thanks and praise that you have given us a quest, some great task that we can accomplish for your glory, some great way to illuminate the gospel, some great way to trust that you are good and that what your word says is good and true, some great way that we can trust that if we put ourselves in a posture of obedience, that it is the means by which your grace comes to change and transform us and to fit us for that glorious day when we will spend all eternity with you and the Son and the Holy Spirit in the love and delight and affection and beauty and glory that flows unendingly between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that that is our end, that that is our destiny.

And to have that not just as ourselves, but in the company of others, all the others from every age and every race and every nation who put their faith and trust in you.

And so, Father, we thank you for this great word of yours, this great way of live, this great quest for those of us in marriage. And we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would move with might and power and deep conviction in each of our lives, that we might die to sin and put on virtue, that we might let Jesus speak deeply into each of our hearts to rule, that we will do everything in the name of Jesus for the honor and glory of the Father, and that, Father, for me as a husband, that I will learn more and more how to self-effacingly love my wife, and for the wives who are here, that they will learn how to submit to their husband as is fitting to the Lord.

Father, we ask for your help, and we give you thanks and praise that you hear and you help. And all these things we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.