

From Principle to Practical

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[0 : 00] Let me say at the outset that I always, always, always enjoy listening to you sing.! And one of the things that I really like when we sing together is how the scriptures!

Our singing would very, very quickly degenerate into something that really was of no redemptive value. Do you understand that?

When you remove the Word of God from the hearts of God's people, and the Word of God does not inform the thinking, the behavior, the singing of God's people, very quickly all other kinds of things that are idolatrous come in and take their place.

By the way, enthusiastic, powerful singing is not something that we do just because we work at it. It is an indicator of the filling of the Spirit of God. Isn't that right? Be filled with the Spirit and sit there like a bump on a log, like a, you know, I know it's a good song and it's a Bible, but I'm not singing.

[1 : 34] May it never be. May it never be. May it never be. Okay. Turn in your Bibles this morning to Ephesians chapter 5. We're going to be looking at 28 through 30.

And it dawned on me that I have fallen behind in what is perhaps one of my most redundant statements to you. Do you know what a redundant statement is?

It's something that is repetitious. Now, having said that I've fallen behind on one of my most redundant statements, you know what I'm going to say next, which is, thank you.

When I walk from there to here, when I sit there, I think that. I am dependent upon the authority and power of the Word of God.

I am dependent upon the power of the Spirit of God. And I am dependent on the prayers of God's people.

[2 : 39] I suppose it wouldn't hurt if I prayed too, right? I suppose it wouldn't hurt if I prayed too, right? Gracious Father, as the psalmist in 119 said, open your word that we might behold wondrous truths in your law.

We're thankful for the clear revelation of the book of Romans in chapter 8 where we understand that part of the ministry of the Spirit of God involves helping us know you.

And in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, understand you. And so we together ask for the power of the Spirit, my declaration being characterized by the enabling of the Spirit of God, and then the hearing and the application of the Word, the Word, the Scriptures, being strengthened and enabled by your Spirit that Christ might be exalted among us this morning.

Amen. Amen. Now, we come back in Ephesians chapter 5, looking at verses 28 through 30, to Paul's very careful instruction on what being a Spirit-filled believer is to be like.

And I want us to understand that behind this issue of the responsibilities that a Christian husband has is not this idea that God is giving to us just a set of expectations that we are to go about doing on our own strength.

[4 : 26] Listen, being the husband that God wants you to be is understood in the context of the filling of the Spirit of God and the power of the Spirit of God.

And you remind yourself of what Jesus said there in John chapter 15. He said, without me you can do nothing. And so as I am working my way through the passage and we are studying this together and you find yourself sitting there thinking, man, I'm not there.

It might be that one of the things that you really do need to address is that you have been going about the responsibility of being the husband in your home without knowing Christ.

And as a result, when I lay out what it means to be a Christian husband, it's like, I'm not there. Well, if you don't know Christ, it's understandable that you can't go there. And the first need that you have is the work of God drawing you to the cross and you coming to Christ and finding complete forgiveness for all of your sins.

But it might also be that you're sitting there as a believer and you are really still in your spiritual infancy and really moderately indifferent to the necessity of you having the help of God to do the things that He wants you to do.

[5 : 44] And so it's important for you to learn that to be the man that God wants you to be and to be the husband that He has called you to be is that you have to have the enabling of the Spirit of God that you might do the things God wants.

It's interesting as we look at Ephesians chapter 5, and we actually could pick up there in verse 25 and carry on through the end of the chapter that Paul takes quite a bit of time to talk about the role and the responsibility of the Christian husband.

And being a godly husband is important. But at the same time, I do not want to suggest that really the greatest need we have today is that men be better husbands.

You see, God does care about marriage, but that's not the very center issue of all of eternity. The central theme of Scripture is the cross of Christ whereby He turns rebels into joyful worshipers because He was willing to die in our place and His blood has satisfied the debt that my sin created. And God's intention is to turn us who were once rebels into joyful and obedient worshipers. And He intends for our lives and our relationships to reflect Christ and draw unbelievers to ask a reason, as it says in Peter, what is the deal with you?

[7 : 13] Why do you treat your wife differently? And why do you carry on and care for her the way you do? Now, I don't want you to miss that while we're going to spend our time thinking about the role and responsibility of a Christian husband, that Christ is at the very center of all that we are doing.

In fact, if you want to kind of tag that and check it out, all you have to do is pick up there in verse 25 and kind of play through and notice how many times in this short passage the apostle reminds us that really the thinking he is addressing is Christocentric.

Jesus is at the center of it. Well, let's pick up now, though, at verse 28. Let me read it, and then we'll address it together. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. So I want to begin this morning by understanding that what the apostle is telling us is that we, in thinking in our marriage relationships, are to have this mindset that's like Christ's.

And so I want you to think with me this morning about the principle of the one flesh and Christ's model. First, I want to stop and make a correction. You'll notice there that it says that in verse 28, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

[8 : 50] He who loves his wife loves himself. The argument that the apostle is making in verse 28 and 29 is really not in any way a tacit endorsement of self-serving love.

Biblical love for a wife is not a strategy for you as a husband to get your way. How many of you understand what I just said? You do nice things, you get nice things.

That's the thinking of the world, isn't that right? It's all about what kind of investment am I getting back on my, what kind of return am I getting back on my investment? I put this kind of effort in and so I have a right and an expectation to get something back.

I want you to be sure of this, that the Spirit of God is not endorsing the idea that floats around in our culture of really all of our motivation ultimately being self-serving and the purpose for which we do things is really to get back what we want out of anything.

I want you to follow and mark with me that what we're really dealing with here is not a plan for self-gratification but a plan for modeling our lives as husbands after the example and the character of Christ.

[10 : 14] Well, let's understand, however, that when Paul speaks about one flesh, he is not referring to a new idea. I want you to turn back in your Bibles just for a moment, go way back to the front, and incidentally, if you get it right at the beginning, you have a better chance of getting it right all the way through.

So go back to Genesis chapter 2. When Paul, in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 28 and 29, speaks about one flesh, he's really drawing attention to the Old Testament statement that is made in Genesis chapter 2, verse 24.

So let me read it to you. What's it say?

One flesh. One flesh. I want you to understand that biblical love is all about taking care of what God has made part of you.

When a husband takes care of his wife properly, he is taking care of someone that God has put in a unique relationship with you that is apart and is different from every other person in the world.

[11:44] I want you to look with me now at Matthew chapter 19. Matthew chapter 19, Jesus was approached by individuals who had some questions and they really hoped that they were going to catch Jesus in a dilemma.

The Jews at that time had two different attitudes on the matter of divorce. One followed one school of thought and the other followed another school of thought. And one school was, hey, if you don't like her, trade her out, get somebody else.

And so they came and they were challenging Jesus on the matter of marriage. And I want you to look at what Jesus says as he is responding. I like, I like, I like.

Verse 4 to begin with. They ask him a question. They think, you know, there they are kind of rubbing their hands like, we have him. What's he going to say about divorce?

If he takes the conservative view of, don't be doing that. He's not going to make everybody happy. And he's not going to be very popular. And if he says, sure, if you don't like it, bag her.

[12:54] Get somebody else. Well, then he's going to be violating. And they thought they had him. And I like the way Jesus addresses it. Look at verse 4. And he answered, have you not read?

Now, who was he talking to? He was talking to the Pharisees. I mean, you know, they were the bells and whistles of education in that day. I want you to understand that he was talking to the people who had the advanced degrees and were all over top of it.

And they had a very dismissive people attitude towards those who couldn't read. You mean, you can't read? And Jesus is saying, have you not read?

Just to understand how well-versed they were in Scripture, how many of you notice that when Jesus recites a passage, he doesn't give the reference? Do you know why he does that?

Here, let me, so that you understand, and you're there partly, for God so loved the world. How many of you know the reference? Wave at me. You know the reference. We got that one down, and it's settled in our mind.

[14:02] Jesus, all they knew, they knew the Bible backwards and forwards, and yet here he is, he's dinging them. It is like a backhanded slap to the Pharisees. Have you never read?

And then he recites it. He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate. Great. You have heard me do weddings, and you know that I get emotional during weddings.

I do. The first wedding I ever got emotional at was my own. Judith walked through the back doors, and I started crying. And here I was, Mr. Soccer and, you know, All-State player and blah, blah, blah.

And here I was over at the front of the church. She thought, what have I gotten myself into? Well, I do want you to know that I followed through and have been her husband for 40, almost 44 years.

[15:21] But I am deeply affected by weddings. I really am. One of the things that I will say to a couple is that from this moment on, every thought and action must be weighed against its effect upon the union the two of you are making.

It's an amazing thing that God takes two and actually makes them one.

You know, as you think about this, God did something in your marriage that you may not have realized. But the fact of your ignorance of that fact doesn't change the eternal significance of the statement and authority of the Word of God.

It says He makes two into one. And I have pondered this, though I cannot say that I speak with definitive authority on this, but I think that in marriage, there is an aspect to which the union of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in this beautiful union is modeled to some degree in marriage and certainly the union between Christ and the church is modeled in marriage.

I love that statement and I would encourage you to have it woven into your heart and life, what God has joined together. What? What? Let no man. Don't you mess with that one.

[17:02] Well, let me say two things about this, going back to the passage in Ephesians in particular. Loving your wife is rational. It really is rational. It's intelligent because your wife is actually your own flesh and blood by divine appointment.

It's a proper, intelligent thing to do. Furthermore, loving your wife is responsible. It's an obligation that God has placed on you as a husband in marriage.

If you don't want it, then don't say, I do. But once you say, I do, it's done. God's expectation is that you will follow through and that you will love the wife that He has providentially given you.

You know what? When a man does not love his wife, his real problem is not his wife. His real problem is that he has chosen to not love God and not honor God.

Now, I want you to put your finger, if you will, going back to Ephesians chapter 5. Look at verse 29 and follow with me. For no one ever hated his flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ does the church.

[18:20] Now, the practical thought here is that only a fool would not love and care for his own body. And we're not talking about, you know, Botox and the rest of it, but we are talking about the fact that we are reasonable with our own bodies.

When it's cold, what do you do? I can talk about that right now. About six months from now, you'll all be fretting about the fact, isn't it really hot? We all talk about weather like it's the most important thing in life. You know, it's like, have you noticed it's snowing?

Yes. Six months? It'll be dry. It'll be hot. And we'll all be whining about the fact, what is a thermometer, a temperature?

Ooh, you know, and go on about that. But let me tell you something. We take care of our bodies, right? We do take care of our bodies. We put on more clothes or less clothes. We care for when you're hungry, what do you do?

You feed yourself. By the way, the body you have is the body God gave you, and it's the only one you'll ever have. Am I right? You can't have a substitute. You can't have a replacement.

[19:24] And at the end of the day, you're pretty well stuck with the one you got. Now, you may find yourself on occasion wishing that God had done something better with you. Oh, Lord, I wish I had been Bill Gates, at least had his brain, right?

Or, oh, Lord, I would have liked to have been built like LeBron James and have his basketball skills. Or, you know, I really would like to have the physique and the abilities of a Navy SEAL.

Forget it. You are who you are. God chose that one. And you best stay with the one you got.

There's no change. Aren't you glad that Christ loves you the way He does?

I'm so glad, because He's never trundled into His Father's presence and said anything like, boy, do you know that Tim you gave me? Could I trade him in?

Is there anybody out there that would be a little kinder, a little nicer, a little less, you know, He's such a project. 65 years and I'm still having to work with Him.

[20:29] And you know what? Father, He still does some of the same things He did when He was a kid. He loves me. By the way, Seth, where are you?

That is a good song. I like the words. By the way, I like Seth and Joy singing, but I like the words. It's all about, what's that saying about the God we serve?

He's faithful in His love. Don't you like that? Never changes. And so when a Christian husband stands in the shadow of the cross, he loves his wife because she is His by divine plan.

And God says, she is His own body. And so, I don't know if you have to do it right now, but it wouldn't be bad to nudge her.

My Judas is way back there. Hi, honey. But you know, you nudge her and say, honey, you're mine. I mean to tell you, you're it. You're my body.

[21:33] Woo! I like that. Lots of thinking there going on, but you know, just stay with the plan. Okay? Maybe we have to have man-to-man talk about that a little while later.

So, let's think now, we got this business of, it's one flesh. This is my body. I want to think about practical one flesh service.

How does this play out? I want you to understand that the Bible has a number of different things that we can think about. For one, husbands are called to provide for their wife.

Let me say that slowly, because we are living in a day and age where the idea of providing for your wife is kind of like slipping into the distant past. you know, it's what, hey, you know, we're all into this on our own, and you better carry your own weight.

And if you don't, you're in trouble. Genesis chapter 3 makes it clear that sin didn't change a man's service regarding being the principal provider of the home.

[22 : 37] How do I know that? God says to a woman, hey, part of the consequences of your disobedience to me is that you're going to struggle with your husband's spiritual leadership and headship.

It's not just a problem of contemporary culture. It is the result of the fall. God also said, and by the way, you're going to suffer during childbearing.

And there are more than one of you women who have said as you are sitting there going, you know, you said, Eve, what did you do? You know, you understand that.

And God says to Adam, and by the way, while you're out there working in the field, it's not going to be quite as cooperative as it could have been. And you, in your provision, are going to face all those kind of difficulties that day by day, as you go off to work, you know what?

You find out that the people that you work with, they're a challenge. And the place that you work, it's questionable. You know, it's just part of the fall. But, husbands, I want you to understand, providing is your responsibility.

[23 : 49] Let me say something else in relationship to this. Providing does not mean indulging every whim. Do you follow that? I remember being in a home quite some time ago, so some of you are beginning to, I don't think I've been in your home and seen, but I remember a home that had one case after another that were filled with precious moments.

The house had become a monument to this wife's interest in precious moments. Now, I think we're past that in our contemporary culture. I don't see much out on Facebook, but there was not hardly a room in the house that didn't have these precious moment trophies.

and by the way, do you realize that they're kind of passe now? They're gone. They're gone. And you walked into one room, there are two or three display cases.

You walked into another room, there are display cases. You walked into, you know, everywhere you turn. And I thought to myself, this poor working guy is out there just slogging his brains out so his wife can buy another precious moments.

I want to say this real carefully, and I want husbands to write it down. Sometimes the real need is contentment, not more possessions.

[25 : 07] And a godly husband should love his wife enough to help her with that. Husbands are called to protect their wives. Physical protection is intuitively obvious.

Do you follow that? Judith and I, we sleep in the same bedroom, we sleep in the same bed. And there are times where she hears things that I don't. And to this point, 44 some years almost of marriage, she's never said, let me check on that.

That's not the way it happens in our home. I mean, now she may alert me to the fact, did you hear that? No, no, I didn't. I did hear it, you know.

But it's like, I'm hoping it'll pass. You know, there's a reason why God made you stronger. But I want to talk about the fact that our caring for our wife is not just a matter of physical protection, but it's also spiritual protection.

We live in a wicked and perverse world. And a husband is responsible for knowing what the spiritual needs of his wife are and being sensitive to those things that are going to cause her to fall.

[26 : 27] Don't allow her to get overburdened. Over the years as a pastor, I can't tell you how many times I've said to hardworking ladies in our church, be sure you ask your husband what he thinks about you being involved in this.

The easiest thing to do is to see a problem and decide that you need to solve this one, and this one, and this one, and this one, and pretty soon you get all kind of worn out. And guess what follows being worn out?

Getting spiritually drained and then eventually getting embittered because, you know what? Nobody else is doing it. You feel like Chicken Little. Red hen is what I meant. Don't allow your wife to neglect the care of her own spiritual soul.

You know, now I'm not suggesting that you grab your wife's wrist and drag her out of bed when you get up earlier than she does and take her into the living room and sit her down and say, you will have devotions this evening or this morning, and I want you to read three chapters, and here's a prayer list that I want you to work on.

Not a good idea. Got it? Can I tell you something from experience? Experience? I've learned that modeling is far more effective than instructing.

[27 : 40] And Judith and I, we pray together, we share things that God is teaching us together, but in an earlier life, how many of you understand what I'm talking about? That's not, you know, whatever you think.

It's at an earlier life, I thought it was my job to give her these instructions like, you will have devotions. What chapter did you read? I found that there was a much softer and gentler way to do it.

But I'm responsible. Do you understand that? Don't allow your wife to spend all of her time just gazing at what she could conceivably buy on the internet if you were having a better job. Do you understand? Kill the Wi-Fi so that her discontentment is not breached. Oh, boy, am I getting myself in trouble? There we go. Okay. And how many, I won't ask this.

When I go to doctor's office, there's one magazine in particular I don't pick up. Do you know what that is? It's called People Magazine. Do you know why I don't look at People Magazine? A couple reasons.

[28 : 46] Number one, I don't need to see all the scantily dressed women who are flashing what the current style is. That's not of God. Nor do I need to read all about the bad marriages and who happens to be sleeping with so-and-so currently and who she was.

That's not of God. Here's another one. Don't allow your children to be disrespectful to your wife. I like the phrase, you will not talk to my wife that way.

It's not about your mom. It's about my wife. Do you follow that? You will not talk to my wife that way.

Okay. Let's keep moving quickly. Snow's coming down. We got guys out there taking care of it.

I am so thankful. By the way, you don't have to tip them, but do tell them thank you. Will you do that? Okay. Husbands are called to pray for their wife.

Your wife should know that she occupies an affectionate part of your daily prayer life. Honestly. We pray for those people that we dearly love.

[29 : 56] Am I right or wrong? No. Many of you here are parents. I see you guys smiling, Pat and Pam, your little grandson, right?

Have you been praying a lot for him lately? I mean, I'm seeing Facebook posts all the time. It's like, you know what? When we love somebody, we pray a lot. And I'm suggesting that your responsibility, husband, is to be conscious and deliberate in praying for your wife.

Now, by the way, praying for her requires that you love her and that you know what her needs are.

And if your communications with her are kind of limited to grunts, she doesn't have any opportunity of really letting you know what's going on.

Honey, what concerns you? By the way, if you take enough time, you will figure that one out.

Ask her for specifics. What are some things I can pray for? Oh, nothing. Do you know when she says, oh, nothing, what it's saying? Probably. It's saying, I don't know that you'll do it, so why mess with it? Or, it could be saying, I'm really having a big time struggling.

[31 : 12] I don't want to embarrass myself by telling you what a jerk I am spiritually. What's going on? I learned a long time ago as a parent that whenever my children said nothing, it was radar up, big time signal, it's time to go on a fishing expedition.

And my kids usually would stick with the nothing because they thought that was going to work. And I would, my trump was this, it's all right. I'm going to start praying that God will bring it out so I can be a daddy to you.

You know, they did not like that prayer because God did. Okay? So you're praying for your wife.

And if you're going to pray for her, guess what you ought to do?

You ought to let her know, hey, how'd it go? How was grocery shopping today with, you know, the little boy that I helped you have? You know? Was he really cooperative?

Okay. Okay, here we go. Husbands are called to nurture, listen to this carefully, the purity of their wife. Husbands are called to nurture the purity of their wife.

[32 : 20] We live in a perverse and wicked world that is not a friend of grace. You don't need to be the Ayatollah of the TV or of Facebook, but it does pay attention.

It's a good thing to pay attention to what's floating around. Finally, husbands are responsible for their wife's spiritual progress. I want you to hear this carefully.

The most difficult thing that a husband has to do is not provide physically for his wife. It is to be the spiritual leader of his wife because you know what it takes to do that?

It takes, first of all, being out in front of her. Isn't that true? It also takes you taking care of the things in your life that are interfering with you being effective in her life.

Matthew chapter 7 says this, hey, if you're going to be poking in somebody else's eye, guess what you've got to be clear on? You've got to be clear on your own eye. And I want you to understand that the Scripture is explicitly clear that the husband is the one that is to be the spiritual leader and the spiritual encourager of his wife.

[33 : 38] Now, here's the truth, men. Face it. Most of the wives we married got a head start. Do you follow that? That doesn't change the fact that you're still responsible.

And so, with humility, there's nothing wrong with saying, I'm out in front and I may have to ask a lot of questions of God and His Word and other godly men, but I'm out in front.

That's my job. So, can you say that your dear wife today is more godly, more content, more settled, more generous, more patient because of your spiritual encouragement and leadership?

Fair question, isn't it? The Spirit of God, the Word of God, the Husband of God should be instruments to help a wife grow spiritually.

And all of God's people said a non-Caucasian, I like that, we're so free from Byron Yon, a non-Caucasian amen. Amen. Okay. Oh, that's surprising. Could we play that back?

[34 : 43] I just want to be sure that I heard what I did. Okay, here we go. Can you say that your dear wife is more godly, more content, more settled, more generous, more patient because of your spiritual encouragement and your leadership?

Can you point to a time in your marriage where you helped her deal with a festering attitude or some resentments that were actually leading her to withdraw from ministry and service?

Hey, men just kind of putt, putt, putt through life. You know what? I'm here. I'm going to work. It's good. It's all good. I'm getting along.

It's like no big deal. And the wife is in there. She's affected by emotions and dynamics. And you know what? I can't tell you how many times I've watched wives begin to develop inner resentments about things and slowly begin.

You know what the signal is? Drawn away. Can you think of ways in which you have shaped her thinking about Christ and the kingdom? Has her discernment and wisdom increased over the years because of your influence and your ministry?

[35 : 57] Does she know you really believe in her and take pleasure in her growth and value, let me say this carefully and slowly and I want you to listen to it, men, and value her progress as one of the true accomplishments in your life?

Hmm? So what did you do, Tim? That was really important.

Well, one of the things I did is I worked hard after God really dealt with me at being a better husband and I'm continuing to grow at that and I'm working hard at being a good daddy.

I have a dear friend who, guys, let me tell you something, it's snowing out there and I have a couple things to say so just bear with me and nobody say to me you stayed too long.

I had a dear friend that I called Thursday, Friday. No, it's Thursday. He's out of ministry today and when I got on the phone with this man that I've known for a number of years, good godly man, he said to me, he says, you know, Tim, I found myself at the same kind of emotional place that you must have been at when Maranatha gave you a sabbatical.

[37 : 30] That was one of the kindest things you did to me, men, people. You let me have an opportunity to get my battery back up and this pastor said, we couldn't work that out and my doctor said, you either do it, get out of this or you're going to die.

He said, and I chose to be a husband and a father instead of a pastor. That's a right call.

Do you understand that? That's a right call. When it's all over, being the man God wants you to be means being the spiritual leader in your home.

Amen. And facing that challenge has to have a profound effect upon a man because like the apostle said when he was thinking about the significance of the gospel, here's what he said, who is sufficient for this?

I want to talk about sufficiency as I close. The man who has not come to Christ this morning who is sitting here listening to the teaching of the word of God about the responsibility of being a true man has no hope and no remedy apart from the cross of Christ because here's the deal.

[39 : 00] We, by our nature, are perverted, wicked sinners who are only all about our self. And the gospel announced that we stand justly condemned before God.

And God sent his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the penalty and to pay for our sins that we who are broken in our rebellion against God may find complete forgiveness because Jesus died in our place.

And if you're here and do not know Christ, the thing you need more than anything else is not further coaching on how to be a better husband. You need Jesus. If you are here as a man who knows Christ, there is no way you can grow without humility and brokenness.

Hey, I need help. I need God's help. I need the help of men of God. I need encouragement and I am willing to humble myself enough to say I've got a mess and I need God to help me change it.

Here's what I know. Men who are unwilling to humble themselves are at odds with a God who will reveal their stupid pride.

[40 : 24] I know that by personal experience. And I know that when God gets a hold of you, it's good on the other side. Do you follow that?

Let's close in prayer. Let's close in prayer.