

# The Image of Christ in Marriage

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 19 May 2024

Preacher: Rev. Daniel Avitan

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Father in heaven, we thank you that your word addresses every aspect of human life. And Lord, we would be foolish to be people that treat your word like a buffet, taking what we enjoy, leaving what might seem unappetizing.

Lord, this morning as we open up in your word and take a look at what you have to say to us about husbands and wives, Lord, we pray that you would, by your Holy Spirit, help us to be underneath your word, to consider your word, even to wrestle with your word, but Lord, ultimately to hear and do and obey and to live by your word.

Not because you are some kind of vindictive or angry or egotistical or tyrannical God, because you are good and perfect and holy.

You deserve all the praise and you've given us your word for our benefit, for our encouragement. And we pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen. So, obviously by my prayer, you might have guessed we're looking at a potentially controversial text.

And what's interesting, and maybe you guys would pick this up living in a government town, whenever there's a controversial announcement in the government, be it the liberals or the conservatives, whoever, it's usually announced in the afternoon on a Friday before a long weekend.

[ 1 : 3 1 ]     So, it just so happens that we are going to be talking about wives being subject to their husbands on a long weekend. That was completely coincidental.

I mean, it could have been last week on Mother's Day, but I don't think that would have flown super well either. So, the point is, we preach through books of the Bible.

We set our preaching schedule months in advance, and it just so happened that, here we go, we're preaching through 1 Peter chapter 3 this morning. But jokes aside, I want to open up with a question.

What is real power? Is it the ability to subjugate, to conquer, exert one's will upon another so that both you and the, so that the subdued can serve you?

Is power merely a zero-sum game where there's winners and losers, rulers and the ruled, the strong and the weak? It seems that in our day, and again, generally speaking, I'll use a lot of generalities, but I'll make sure I preface my generalities with, this is a generality.

[ 2 : 4 1 ]     That seems to be the way power is portrayed. But I'll just put forward to this right off the bat, that we have a distorted view of power in the West, partly because of the influences of socialism and Marxism in universities over the last 100 years, that seems to interpret everything through a power dynamic of oppressed and oppressor.

But I would say even more so because we are broken people. We are bent. We are addicted to power where we win and others lose. We are addicted to a type of power where we are elevated and fawned over, and that ultimately means people serving our interests.

We are addicted to a type of power that demands to be served and not to serve. And by the way, if you aren't striving for the subjugating part of the power dynamic, and you find yourself being subjugated and being on the low end of this equation, that also speaks to the lens by which you view power in our world, strong and weak.

But you might just be on the weak end of it. I would say, again, that this is a distorted view of what God intended when he created the world, how we are to interact relationally with one another.

So we enter into a portion of our scripture, 1 Peter 3, 1-7, that opens up by saying, Wives, be subject to your husbands.

[ 4 : 25 ] Big question underlines this entire section. Is this a pretext to justify a ruler versus ruled relationship within a marriage? Where the man is superior and the wife is inferior?

Or is there something else at work? How should we navigate this text? An easy way, and a lot of more conservative commentators would look at it as a contextual issue.

We can just talk about it contextually. But really, that either diminishes God's word or it doesn't deal with the sharp edges. So, how do we deal with a text like this?

I've said this in the past. I'll say it again, and I'll say it in the future. With trembling, we walk towards difficult passages in the Bible.

That's our commitment in this church. That's why we try our very best to preach through the entirety of the Bible. And that's what we'll do this morning. But we're going to do so with the hermeneutic or the lens that God is good.

[ 5 : 37 ] And that in God, there is no evil. And that God looks to bless and to encourage and to build up. Not to strike down, not to subjugate, not to curse.

So, this passage, like the rest of God's word, is good news. If that makes your skin crawl a little bit, let's stick with me.

It is good news, not just for men, but it has to be good news for all, which includes women. So, Peter does indeed address wives, verses 1 to 6. The biggest portion of this section is addressed to wives.

Men have one verse. However, in both cases, Peter provides principles that help men and women live in service to one another.

But most importantly, to glorify Christ and follow his example of using their freedom to serve others. You would have known this if you were here the past couple weeks. We talked about that Christ sets us free, not from responsibility, not from commandments, but in order that we may serve and to lay down our lives for others.

[ 6 : 50 ] That reality, that truth, is going to inform this section as well. So, Peter addresses wives with three imperatives, three things, three commands.

But he also addresses husbands, in the case of husbands, verse 7, with two commands. It's very simple. We'll look at wives in these three imperatives and then husbands with their two imperatives and see how God, through the writings of the Apostle Peter, calls both men and women to imitate and image Christ in their lives and together in their marriage.

Friends, I'll say it again. This is good news for us. It helps us to live faithfully for God's glory and the good of our neighbors and as citizens of heaven as we live here on earth.

It's the message of 1 Peter. But this is good news. Why don't we jump right into it? Let's take a look at these three imperatives for wives.

But before we get into it, just a bit of a reminder, a critical reminder from previous weeks. The first one is to remember that this section is not an island in 1 Peter. It has a whole portion that goes before it that will inform our reading.

[ 8 : 08 ] I've mentioned that a bit already. But this section is embedded in Peter's letter. So it opens up by saying in verse 1, likewise, which connects it to the previous section that calls for free citizens of heaven and to offer their lives as a sacrifice for the service of God and for others.

That is a very important point. The section that goes immediately before it, verses 21 to 25 of chapter 2, is this beautiful portrayal of Jesus as the suffering servant who lays his life down for his sheep and gathers and oversees his sheep who are wayward, who are lost.

He is the overseer of their souls. The second important thing, sorry, the second important thing to remember is that we, and this is from a number of weeks previously, that the imperatives of Jesus always precede, the indicatives of Jesus always precede the imperatives.

What am I saying? What God does through Christ always informs how we then live, which is to say, Jesus dies on the cross making us his own.

In light of that, then we live. But it's not the other way around. It's not, we do fantastic works for God, we curry his favor, we tip the scale in our favor, God looks down, he then says, worthy, and then bestows upon us salvation.

[ 9 : 44 ] And that's an important key bit in this because this is a hard text, a very difficult text, not just for Roman women in the first century, but for women and men, we'll see, throughout the centuries.

So two really important bits to remember from previous sections in 1 Peter before we get into it. So, okay, that's a bit of an important lens, a reminder, as we get into the portion of Scripture.

Let me read. The first imperative, the first command, be subject to your husbands. Likewise, verse 1, likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

Pause there. The Roman world valued order above almost everything else, the building block for society.

A rightly ordered home was critical for a rightly ordered empire. A properly ordered home meant that a woman would follow her husband in all social, religious, and political matters.

[ 11 : 02 ] Women would not enjoy friendships apart from their husband's sphere of connection. She would worship his household gods. She would raise his children and be faithful to him, even though it was permissible and almost, it was almost ubiquitous that men would have mistresses or other companions, be they women or boys, and they couldn't say a thing about it.

But what happens when a woman becomes a Christian in ancient Rome? The potential for disruption or disorder within the household was a real threat. That's specifically if the husband didn't come to faith as well, but it was just the wife.

She would not add Christ to her household's existing collection of gods, but worship him alone. Big problem in the ancient world to not follow one's husband. She would have a new friend group outside of her home, and not like a nice, you know, we're going to grab coffee every, you know, third Thursday of the month and gossip.

This new friend group was like a family. She was welcomed into a new community. She wasn't calling this person or that person by their names, but brother and sister.

She would have a new friend group that would be even closer in many respects to her own family. She would continue to honor the emperor. We saw that in chapter 2, but no longer would the emperor be the god king, for only Christ is the eternal king of kings.

[ 12 : 41 ] You see how this has a potential to disorder a home and potentially disorder the empire. it's in this context that Peter exhorts women to submit to their husbands, which raises all sorts of how does one do that questions, especially when one considers that being subject to one's husband no longer includes the very aspects that would maintain household order.

This is a minefield in the first century. So Peter is doing this for a couple big reasons. Number one, God also is a god of order, not chaos.

An ordered household is a good thing, not necessarily in the Roman context, but nevertheless, it's a good thing. But also because Peter wants to prevent Christianity to be seen as a social ill and an evil that destroys family cohesion, but also, and finally, because this is an opportunity to evangelize an unbelieving husband.

That's all well and good, but it's still, it's still, there's still the rub. Wives, be subject to your husbands. So a few important notes.

What this is not saying, and this is an important bit, this does not mean that husbands are to have authority over the wife as if she were a slave or piece of property. Not at all.

[ 14 : 13 ] The only place, I'll just say this, nowhere in the New Testament is the husband given one-way authority over the wife, interestingly. The only place that that kind of authority over, that authority over, is referenced is in marital relations where both the husband and the wife have authority over each other's bodies.

Again, we're not going to talk about that, that's a rabbit trail, but that would be unheard of in the ancient world. That's 1 Corinthians 7 if you want to take a look at it.

This is also not a blanket statement that all women should be subject to all men at all times. Instead, very clearly, it says that a woman should be subject to her own husband. Also, when it says to be subject, is it saying that a woman in every context should be subject to her husband without exception, without pushback?

If a wife tells a husband to run an errand or to consider an issue that he may have overlooked or encourages him to do good and not evil, does that imply an infringement upon the commandment in 1 Peter 3?

The answer is no, and we'll touch on that a bit more in the section when we look at husbands. So, that's all of what this isn't saying.

[ 15 : 34 ] So, even that is some good stuff. I mean, it puts it in context, it helps us to nuance it. Still, it's a call to be subject to another person.

And it's still, there's still a rub, there's still sharp edges with that. It's still in a direct contravention to our, to today's egalitarian standards and values here in Ottawa.

But again, we must read this text and see the great wisdom and encouragement in it. Men and women are different. We are different in all sorts of different ways, and some of those differences are less pronounced in some examples.

There are some men that aren't as tall as women or as strong as women. There's a whole, some men are generally speaking, maybe more nurturing, some women aren't so nurturing, but by and large, generally speaking, there are significant differences between men and women.

And to say otherwise is to not understand the way God has created mankind. Women are uniquely positioned in family and community to nurture and to teach and to guide and to create beauty, to create order from chaos, to civilize, to cultivate.

[ 16 : 59 ] But the world does not value such qualities. They're spoken, maybe not ill of, but they're not elevated to the wonderful, glorious things that they are because it's not a position of power.

Such work can't be monetized. It's a lie that our culture tells us that such work, and by the way, this can be done by women that work career jobs or not, it's not so much a call for all women to stay home at all times, but the lie is that the world tells women, in order to flourish, you need to produce, and you need to earn, and you need to be a part of the economy.

And I think that's problematic if that is not understood alongside of this call to create and to bless, to cultivate, to create order out of chaos.

It also contravenes this idea of being untethered by nothing or no one, limitations completely evil. But what is truly evil is to call foul what God has designed to be good, nurturing and beauty creation, love, teaching, protecting.

It's a beautiful thing. I have a dear friend, he's preached here a couple times, Dr. Lyndon Jost, he's in Toronto at Christ Church Toronto.

[ 18 : 38 ] He wrote his dissertation on headship, this very topic, at Wycliffe College. And he said this, our world, quote, our world is confused about what true power and authority is.

In Christ's kingdom, it isn't the external things, the overt, strong, harsh, or abrasive things, but the hidden, gentle, and quiet things that are beautiful. Women are called to be exemplary of what each of us is called to be in relation to God.

Submission, ironically, is true power, for every woman in her marriage has the freedom to choose whether she will submit or demand submission. The world confuses beauty all the time.

It takes what is good and tarnishes it, or excludes a key aspect of what makes it beautiful. This is what it was in the garden when Satan said to Adam and Eve, calling into question what God truly said, the beauty, the goodness, the kindness, the grace of God's command.

He didn't create, but he bent and tarnished and confused, bastardized. Lyndon, my friend Lyndon, touches on what this, the beauty of what godly submission can look like, both for men and for women, by affirming what Peter says about the second imperative.

[ 20 : 12 ] That second imperative is this, the adornment of a godly heart. So look with me at verses 3 and 4. Do not let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear, but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart, with the, here it is, imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

Does Peter forbid all aesthetics? The answer is no. I think what is, to draw from this a legalistic ban on beauty or clothing is to misread this text.

Instead, what he is doing is lifting up what is true, eternal beauty. And it is not on trend that trends come and go, but it is kindness and goodness and truth and faithfulness and compassion.

The kind of beauty that is not subject to the whims of whoever is the number one fashion whatever, I'm not a fashion guy, I don't know what they're called, designer of the day, but rather it's rooted in the imperishable Christ.

And like this view of power that is broken, we have a broken view of beauty in our culture. And it is like hyper broken in our day.

[ 21 : 44 ] Online influencers, style blogs, social media, communicate to, sorry, communicates to us that youth is the only thing that matters. Wrinkles, grays, didn't know how to say this, so I said this and hopefully it's funny, but you understand what I'm trying to say.

Any body that's not a 21-year-old, nine days a week, Pilates instructor. Anything that deviates from that isn't as nice, isn't as beautiful.

You can't diet enough, you can't exercise enough, you can't serum your wrinkles away enough, you have an entire, we have an entire anti-aging cosmetic industry that promises youth and virility.

So last year, Canadians spent some four billion dollars on anti-aging. That includes cosmetic surgery. I'm not lifting this up to say it is evil, but just to say it is disordered.

Beauty, aesthetics, they are God-given, God has made this world to be beautiful and to capture it and to enjoy it is a wonderful thing, but what happens is that we put our eternal worth on the exterior, not what's inside.

[ 22 : 59 ] so pervasive is this lie that many young women and increasingly men in their 20s and 30s are getting body augmentation, plastic surgery to change the look of their face, but nothing is done about the hidden heart, the character of men and women.

Christ, through Peter, is saying, listen, where true beauty resides is in the heart that is turned towards God in the service of him and others.

By the way, that's a call for both men and women. The call is towards modesty and restraint in beauty and aesthetics, which will look different from culture to culture, culture, but it should always mark the Christian.

Again, both men and women. Once again, we are free in Christ, but what do we use our freedom for? For the service of others, to grow in faith, to give God glory.

So it boils down to this. Go home and trash all of your, no, I'm not saying that at all. Ultimate worth has to be found in Christ because only Christ is eternal.

[ 24 : 23 ] Only he is imperishable. If we are wearing nice clothing, if we want to take care of our bodies, that is a beautiful, godly thing to do if it is properly ordered.

But it is a check on our souls, on our hearts. Throughout history, clothing and jewelry have been signs of worth and empowerment and value.

Purples and reds were worn, and maybe still are, I don't know, but they were worn to show your wealth, to show your prowess.

Gold to show, again, your wealth. If we are dressing, if we are engaging in such a way to promote who we are, but we are leaving the inside much dirtier than the outside, we are missing the point.

We will not be free, but we will be enslaved to our passions and desires. This is telling us that the inward is the real. Inward is the authentic, the genuine.

[ 25 : 36 ] The outward fades and perishes. It just does. Concerning the gentle and quiet spirit, this is not some euphemism, this is not some kind of veiled way of saying women need to be pushovers or defined by passivity, not at all.

It is a call to be like Christ. Matthew 11, 29, Jesus is described as gentle and lowly. Gentle and lowly is our Savior.

He is compassionate, he is loving, he is empathetic, he is kind, he is ferociously protective of the vulnerable. Again, like my friend Lyndon said, women are called to be exemplary of what each of us is called to be in relation to God.

It changes things when we read it that way. I mean, you can read, it's a terrible thing about certain interpretations, you can read whatever you want into this, but again, we have this hermeneutic that we can't read one part of the Bible at the expense of another part of the Bible.

We can't read a quiet and gentle spirit without reading about how Jesus is gentle and lowly and all of what that means. The final imperative is to fear nothing.

[ 26 : 56 ] Take a look with me at verses 5 to 6. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by submitting to their own husbands as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord.

And you are her children if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. The third imperative is found, verse 6, fear nothing that is frightening.

Once again, this is not some kind of blanket command to never fear, but again, it's in the context of hope in God, a life of faith. To have faith in Christ even in a situation where one's husband is an unbeliever, it's no easy task.

Fear seems to be a default. Courage is not common. That's why we hold up courage as this wonderful, beautiful virtue because it is not common.

It is remarkable. It is exemplary. In this case, this is a call to not fear.

[ 28 : 00 ] And this is a tough situation because marriages, even the best, can be full and fraught with difficulty and trials. In the case of Sarah, she entrusted herself to God even as Abraham led her into some horrendous situations, marrying her off to basically a warlord, lying, not showing courage himself.

He was not a good man. He made decisions that put her life and her future in jeopardy. But she entrusted herself to the Lord. And I think this is the big emphasis behind what Peter is trying to say.

But this raises another question. Does faith in God mean that a woman ought to stay in a marriage even though there is abuse or neglect? She is subject to her husband no matter what, correct?

It seems like there's a bit, there's no caveat here. There's no, only in this case. But again, we don't read Bible portions as islands.

Historically, in the church, there has been, well, I'll say this first. This is not a how-to manual, an exhaustive how-to manual of how husbands and wives ought to live.

[ 29 : 24 ] It's a part of that. But it is not an exhaustive. So that's why we can't read it as, aha, this is justification for enduring terrible abuse.

Historically, abuse has been among the three legitimate reasons for separation. The other two, abandonment and adultery. It's easy to remember the three A's. Abuse, abandonment, and adultery.

But again, what is in view here is that a wife who willingly submits to an unbelieving husband or in a problematic situation within a marriage is to do so in order to win her husband to faith.

To lay down her life for the sake of her husband and to trust in God's leading and provision. I mean, listen, I'm not saying it's an easy text here to read.

This is stuff that we have to wrestle with. Christine and I, we have a mentor couple. They were instrumental in us coming together. They are retired missionaries in France.

[ 30 : 28 ] But Catherine has this line where, well, I guess David as well, where they say, listen, you just, you lead people to Jesus and they can wrestle with him. They can wrestle with him.

And in a sense, this is what we're doing. We're coming before this text taking a hard, honest look at it. It is not easy. Wrestle with God over it. His shoulders are broad.

He can take it. But thanks be to God that Peter doesn't stop here but also address his husband. So, women, wives, they are called to be subject.

There's all sorts of different caveats that we looked at. They are to adorn themselves with godly character, which is our call as well as husbands and men married or not.

And then to fear nothing, which again is a call to a life of faith. You see, all of these imperatives are applied across the board to everybody regardless of where they are at relationally.

[ 31 : 28 ] But let's take a look at husbands as we continue on. Before we get into it, I'll read this wonderful quote. By Ambrose of Milan. You are not a master but a husband.

What you have acquired is not a handmaid but a wife. Be a sharer in her love. Verse 7 says this. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

The first commandment we see here is to live with one's wife in an understanding way. This is, I mean, maybe the most challenging imperative that command that is given because it requires men to be humble and brave.

To authentically and genuinely count his wife's needs as more significant than his own means asking questions and lots of questions, listening, empathetically, doing the hard work to understand what makes one's wife tick, which is to say recognizing her uniqueness, her strength, her weaknesses, her qualities, her quirks.

It means earning her trust and safeguarding it. It's hard work. It might seem so overwhelming that there's a paralysis. That's where the bravery comes in.

[ 32 : 59 ] there's a call to be brave in all of this. It's to restrict your enjoyment in terms of hobbies and the way you spend your money and your time to focus on this person in front of you.

You know, it is also the call for all of us as we interact with brothers and sisters in the church, not to the same degree, but it's still the call to live in a godly, selfless, self-giving relationship.

Whenever Christine and I have disagreements, which happens, I mean, every fifth year or something, it's, we're always, we nail it all the time.

No, we get into, we get into arguments and almost every time, 9.5 times out of 10, I'm saying, you're not understanding me.

You're not understanding me. And somehow I turn into, like an Italian, like you're not understanding me, my hands go crazy. The call isn't for her to understand me, although that's a very appropriate, that's a very good thing.

[ 34 : 08 ] I am called to understand her. In the moment, that means I may or may not get to my issues within this disagreement, within this tete-a-tete.

But I ought to get to hers. How on earth are you to understand anyone, let alone your own wife? Or, again, expand it out to your friends, to your parents, whoever it may be, if you are heavy-handed, demanding, and using your authority for your selfish gain and not for her flourishing.

How on earth can you understand your wife? If your chest is so puffed up and your ears are so stopped that you can't understand what she has to say, what's even worse is when you tell her what she thinks.

And I'm not trying to make a joke about that, because that is a dismissal. That's not hearing somebody. That is thinking you hear somebody. Different things.

you start to see how this call to understand the wife that you are living with is not some kind of throwaway command, but it is deep. It's heavy, but it is good.

[ 35 : 30 ] The second command is no less demanding, though, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel. Let me read here. Showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life.

I'll pause there. Let's deal first with this weaker vessel comment. For Aristotle, women were weak in body and courage. For other philosophers, women also lacked mental endurance.

Peter's not saying either of that. But he is certainly referring to physical strength in comparison to a man. And that, by the way, has other implications as well for how women have been pushed down and subjugated and how that can cause all sorts of other appearances of weakness.



I'm not saying it is, because it would happen in a man as well. But Peter is specifically talking, almost certainly, referring to a physical difference, a physical weakness.

And again, it is a generality. There are some women that are stronger than some men, but generally speaking, men are stronger than women. And by doing this, he recognizes the very real vulnerability men have, or that women have faced with men who take advantage of their vulnerability over the centuries and millennia.

[ 36 : 59 ] So the response to this reality, showing honor. Honor includes living with understanding, like we just saw, but also seeking the good. Remember, the previous section, Peter says, show honor to everyone, including the emperor.

It means spending one's life, his talents, his time, his treasures for the sake of one's family, but also others as well. So important is this that Peter says, an abdication of such command will stunt one's spirituality.

how can one pray to the Savior who had all the freedoms and privileges of heaven and left it to take on human flesh, to die as a servant on our behalf?

How are we to pray to that God when we are subjugating the very person that he has given us the privilege to help in their walk and life to flourish?

You can see how it would totally stymie one's spiritual life. Again, a call for the inward to match the outward, right?

[ 38 : 10 ] So what ends up happening? We see that in the call to show understanding and to honor a woman, it is directly connected with what we will be judged with as men.

Because Christ himself, what will he, at the end of the age, what will he do? He will present his bride, the church, spotless before God. And that in a part is our call as well, to make sure that the people in our lives, especially wives, they flourish, they grow, that they are heard, that they are understood, that they grow in their spiritual life, in their emotional life, that they are healthy.

It's not a perfect thing, but it is a good thing. You know, there's a, and I'll just say this, because men in our culture have been really struck down quite a bit. I'll wrap things up shortly.

They have been struck down, men have been poo-pooed, and there's a certain segment of a type of masculinity that is not good. But by and large, men have been told that being a man is a problem, and that it's pervasive in the church.

But what's interesting is that a lot of studies are coming out now that show that men who take this seriously are laying down their lives for their families and their wives.

[ 39 : 40 ] They are living in homes where they are valued as fathers and husbands. It's not just church talk.

There's empirical research that backs it up. There's a wonderful book, Worth Your Time. It's called The Toxic War on Masculinity by Nancy Percy, and she dispels a lot of myths about this.

Anyways, to wrap things up, Peter has called men and women to a high standard of sacrificial living. That's really what it boils down to, and it's incredibly difficult because the ideal is incredibly high, for it is Christ Jesus himself.

We are called to imitate and image him. Women in this context imitate Christ by using their freedom to willingly be subject to their husbands as Christ uses freedom to willingly be subject to the will of God.

She lays down her desire for self-glorification so that through her imperishable beauty Christ is glorified. This is something only women can do.

[ 40 : 43 ] Only women can image and represent Christ in this way, in the marriage context. Men are to imitate Christ by using their freedom to willingly serve and lay down their lives, their ambitions, their goals for the sake of their wives and families.

He should not use his physical prowess to subjugate, but to protect and provide to help life and beauty and goodness flourish in his home. He will be judged by how his home flourishes, how his wife flourishes.

And by doing this, he imitates Christ, something he alone can do. A woman can't do this like a man. So what does this tell us? That it takes both men and women to image Christ in a marriage context.

It's not simply Jesus is the husband and the church is the bride, therefore that's kind of it. And that is good, but that is not the full picture. Both men and women image Jesus, proclaim Jesus, what he has done, his goodness, his grace, his gospel.

Power and strength in this context, in the context of Christ, is never to subjugate and dominate, but always to love and to serve and to bless.

[ 41 : 58 ] And like we learned earlier, this is what true power looks like and it's displayed beautifully on the cross of Christ. Friends, whether you are married or not, whether things are going well or not in your marriage, throw yourself at the mercy and the grace of Christ.

Look to him. Imitate him. Work hard by his strength and trust that by his grace, by his cross, he will bless and he will help.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for tough passages in your word. Lord, we thank you that that truth is good.

for us, whether we want to hear it or not. Not to say that every last bit of what we needed to cover was covered, but God, there's enough in here where we can wrestle.

But also, Lord, we can be encouraged that we are not called to live lives for our own selfish gain, but selflessly for the sake of others.

[ 43 : 10 ] Lord, help us. We need your help. And Lord, we pray that in this church that you would bless marriages, that you would help marriages, husbands and wives to grow together, to grow as one and to do so for your glory.

And for those that aren't married, Lord, we pray that you would help them to serve well and Lord, we ask that you would bless them if it is your will for marriage. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.