The Structure of Marriage

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Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[0:00] Well, good morning, everyone. If you'd like to keep your Bibles open there, that would be fantastic. We have, as John has said, we are partway through, quite a way through actually, our series on marriage, where we're looking at Ephesians 5, 21 to 33.

We've seen the mystery of the marriage, the profound mystery of marriage, is that the gospel of Jesus Christ and marriage explain each other.
There are things we would not know about marriage if it was not for the gospel, and there are things about the gospel we wouldn't know if it wasn't for marriage. Marriage, as I've said a number of times, is a human relationship, but it is the penultimate relationship.
It points to the eternal marriage of Christ and his church. One of the things I've also said early in this series is that everything that Ephesians 5 says about marriage comes after he tells us about the power that we need in order to be married as God describes it.
And that is, what we need is the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, pointing us consistently to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who surrendered his will for our sake.
[1:32] And so Ephesians 5, 21, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, is really the foundational verse before the rest of that gets unpacked in the marriage relationship.

And so what I've been saying consistently is that we need to be captivated by Christ or struck by his selflessness, because self-centeredness, our self-centeredness, the human heart, is the main havoc-wreaking problem in many marriages, and is certainly the ever-present enemy in every marriage.
And that's certainly the case with the issue that we're addressing today on the topic of the structure of marriage. The subject of gender roles in marriage is contentious.
It is certainly controversial. But more importantly than it being intellectually contentious or culturally contentious and controversial, it is an issue which for some is deeply personal, which is why we wanted to put the things we put up there just before Nick's announcement.
It is deeply personal for some people and potentially for you sitting in the room now. And that is because verses like Ephesians 5 here have been used as weapons of both oppression and rebellion in marriages.
[3:18] Sin has infected every human culture, every human culture, in such a way that they have found a way, those cultures found a way to interpret headship and submission in a way that has marginalized and oppressed women.

Too many women have suffered abuse at the hands of self-centered men with a sense of entitlement who have no desire to follow Christ, but take virtue of this and twist them and to form unbiblical definitions of headship and submission to pump up their egos.
And in my time as a pastor, I've had the unpleasant task of confronting that scenario on numerous occasions.
And it's something that we as a church take seriously and should never, ever put up with. But despite all of that, this issue must be explored because it's in Scripture.
It's as God, God's communicating something that's very important here. And the other reason we must look at it from God's perspective is that every single one of us come into marriage with an idea of how a husband should behave towards his wife and a wife towards her husband.
[5:04] We bring that regardless of these verses. So I'm going to ask you to tune in and I'm going to ask you to stay with me.

Whether you identify yourself as egalitarian, a feminist, a traditionalist, a complementarian, or any other variety of the interpretive spectrum, the differences between a man and a woman will become an unavoidable issue in marriage.

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You can't dodge it. And as we look into this issue of the structure of marriage and gender roles, we must begin with a look at the good that God intended and how men and women have corrupted that good and what Jesus has done to redeem it and therefore how we practice it.
But it's only until we understand that core principles start with can we then move into the hazardous concepts of authority and submission and headships.
So I'm leading us this morning into a minefield and you wait on the sidelines while I walk in there for a moment and throw myself on the grenades.
[6:35] So here's the structure for this morning as we go through. So the background to Ephesians 5 on marriage is the beginning of the Bible and God creating the material universe.

The first mention of the Bible, of gender in the Bible, occurs with the very first mention of humanity itself. Genesis 1, 26, 28, God created mankind in his own image.
In the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them. God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it.
Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground. Now, I'm going to go over some territory. I've already been here just because it's just helpful to be reminded of it.
The wording of verse 26 is very important. The words, let us, God saying, let us and our point to the plurality of God.
[7:44] It's the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. It's the first glimpses of it we get. But, so God is plural, three in one, but the words image and likeness are both in the original Hebrew language in singular form.

Plurality of God, but the image and the likeness of God is singular. The God of the Bible, in whose image humanity is created, is an eternal community.
And that's the only way, as I said a couple of weeks ago, the only way you can come to terms with Genesis 2.18. The Lord God said, It is not good for a man to be alone.
I will make a suitable helper for him. So Adam is alone and it's not good. It's the only thing in the creation account that's described as not good. That is, Adam is incomplete.
This is before sin entered the world. And so God declares, I will make a helper suitable for him.
Now, the woman is created differently than the way Adam was created.
[9:02] But she is created directly by God. And there's no sense in the biblical accounts at all that she is in any way inferior to the male, in any sense.

Genesis 2.18 calls her a helper suitable for him. And the English word helper translates the Hebrew word.
I've done this before. I want to go over it again. It translates the Hebrew word that is almost always used in the Bible to describe God's helping of Israel.
The helper is someone who makes up for what is lacking in the other.
In other words, if the word is used of God, there is no sense at all that God is in any way inferior to Israel.
[10:12] He is their savior, their rescue, their Lord. You see, the same word is used not just of God, but it's also used in the Old Testament to describe the military help.

Like, for instance, military reinforcements of troops, which if they didn't get the reinforcements, the battle would be lost. So the woman is not a domestic assistant.
The woman is a strong helper. She is a savior friend to the male, to the man.
And so even right at the very beginning of Genesis, men and women are created with absolute equality. Both are made in the image of God.
Both are equally blessed. Both are equally commissioned to have dominion of the earth, to exercise authority over the earth.
[11:22] Both. What this means is that men and women together, in full participation together, carry out God's mandate to rule the world.

But God then tells them, straight after creating the man and male and female, he tells them to be fruitful and fill the earth. That is, that mandate there is a mandate to procreate, and it's a mandate that reflects God's own boundless, life-giving creativity.
The God who is a source of life, his mandate is to reflect his life-giving creativity in the procreation of children.

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And it's a mandate, still to this day, whatever you think about views of gender, that we have to carry out in complementary union.
None of us by ourselves have the ability to fulfil that mandate. So these verses strongly suggest that the sexes, male and female, are equal in dignity and worth, but also different, and they are complementary to one another.
[13:02] In fact, the word suitable, again, feels a bit weak. The word suitable there in Genesis, translate a phrase that is, you could kind of, you literally translate it as, like opposite him, which is another way of saying, God created woman who is just like the man, but also opposite to the man.

And so when the woman is brought to the man in the first marriage ceremony, Adam doesn't go, whoa, humdinger.
He actually, it's a poetry language of flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone. It's a language which goes, you are like me, and yet you're different than me.
You are mysterious, but I'm drawn to you. If you like, they are two pieces of a puzzle. They fit together because they're not exactly alike, nor are they randomly different.
They complete each other. And so what the Bible teaches us is that our gender is not incidental to our humanness, but it actually constitutes its very essence.
[14:43] It goes right down into the very core of who you are, into every cell of who you are. And what that means is we cannot understand ourselves if we try to ignore the way that God has designed us.

Now, one of the first, ironically, one of the first feminist studies that argued for the irreducible gender indifference was Carol Gilligan's A Different Voice, 1980s, early 1980s, I think it was written.
It's been described as a little book that started a revolution, translated in over 20 different languages, a New York Times bestseller, continues to be used today.
Now, Gilligan, a Jewish feminist, argued against what was happening in her circle she was arguing against social theories that tried to emphasise a gender indifference, that if there was any differences, that they were only superficial differences, that really were superficial differences based on culture and social constructs.
what she insisted, with science, with science, with research, that female psychology development, psychological development, their motivations and even moral reasoning were different than those of males.
[16:39] women were different than those of them. She said you could see it right from the get-go from before they could even speak. And she argued absolutely convincingly amongst other things that while men seek maturity by detaching themselves relationally, becoming independent, women see themselves maturing as they attach themselves and become interdependent relationally.

She said that's the irreducible differences between the two in summary form. And I would have to say that what Gilligan, whether she realised it or not, observed about gender difference is clearly played out in Genesis 3, negatively, where man and woman, they rebel against God's design and his rule and the immediate and catastrophic change in their unity between them is just beyond comprehension.
Immediately, rather than a oneness and a union and a complementing of one another, there is blame shifting and finger pointing and accusation. instead of the difference being a source of completion of one another and joy for one another, it becomes an occasion for oppression and exploitation.
The woman remains dependent and desirous of her husband. Her curse, you might notice up there, is a relational curse.
You will desire your husband but he will rule it over you and his protection and love becomes a selfish lust and an exploitation of her.
[18:44] He will dominate her. The man, his curse, a desire to detach himself from relationally and set his course as an independent person to dominate and rule the world, his curse is your work will be your burden.

The thing that you think will be your salvation will exploit you and dominate you and likewise for the woman, the thing that you think will be your salvation will dominate you and exploit you.
What, the whole point of this is to see the equality and the differences but also to see that the problem in marriage is not Ephesians 5.

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The problem is not God's design. The problem is sin. and the profound self-centeredness of the human heart that grabs hold of Ephesians 5 and says I can use this as a weapon.
So, let's unpack how we, therefore, if marriage is a picture, if it meant to display, reflect a greater glory, let's look at how we do that in marriage.
[20:16] Ephesians 5. tells us that this is, in fact, the profound mystery of marriage between a man and a woman. It's a living illustration of the relationship between, the saving relationship between Christ and his church.

And so, when Ephesians 5 talks about specific roles, what is happening here is it's revealing something magnificent and about God.
And what we discover is that Jesus is the pattern for both genders and both roles. First of all, we see it in the submission of Jesus.
Philippians 2, verses 5 to 11, celebrate that although Jesus was equal with God, he entered himself of his glory and took on the role of a servant.
And these verses teach quite clearly the equality of the father and the son, but also the voluntary submission of the son to the father to secure our salvation for the glory of the father.
[21:45] Nowhere in the New Testament are we told in any way, hinted at in any way, the God, the father coerced, forced, manipulated, or subjugated the son in any way whatsoever.

His submission, the submission of the son is wholly voluntary. It was his gift to his father.
And the father accepts the gift according to Philippians to, and exalts the son to the highest place.
In other words, what happens is each exists to please the other, to exalt the other, to love and honour the other.
and so there's this reciprocal, the love and honour are given, they are accepted, and they are given again. And in no sense at all from Philippians 2, is the submission, the voluntary submission of Jesus, an assault on his dignity or his divinity in any way whatsoever.
[23:14] it was in fact the path, it was the path to the father giving him greater glory.

This is the vibrant life of the trinity. The father and son relationship is a pattern of the relationship between the husband to wife.
Submission in marriage is a gift offered by the wife to the husband for her greater glory.
But Jesus is also the pattern for the husband. It would be a mistake, I think, it would be a mistake, and husbands, you need to hear this, it's a mistake to see that it takes an equal degree of submission for men to submit to their roles as servant leaders.
Particularly if we see ourselves maturing by detachment and independence. you see, what Jesus does in his life, in his ministry, in his teaching, is he doesn't give us a different definition of leadership, he doesn't give us an alternative, what he does is he actually reveals the true definition of what leadership actually is in every sense, in all leadership, all leadership is.
[25:02] greatness is the one who is most self-effacing, most sacrificial, most devoted to the good of the other.

A famous passage, John 13, Jesus washes these disciples' feet. servant, and what's famous about it is that the master, the one that they have become to know as the Lord, becomes the servant, takes on the role of the lowest activity of a servant in Jesus' culture, to wash the feet of those who were superior.
And what he demonstrates here in the most dramatic way is that authority and leadership mean that you become the servant. You die to serve in order to love and to serve others.
As Jesus tells us in Mark 10, he did not come to be served but to serve and to serve to the point of surrendering his life to death. That much of a sacrifice.
And so what Jesus reveals directly from the God head, the design of creation is that all authority is servant authority.
[26:35] Not some of it, all authority is servant. There is no other definition except one that's redefined by sin. Any exercise of authority and power to please or advance yourself is in effect an abdication of authority and leadership.

That's what it is. It's an abdication of authority and leadership. And so in Ephesians 5, the husband submits to the role of servant leader who uses his authority and his power to express a love that does not even stop at dying for his beloved.
That's headship in Ephesians 5. In other words, when you step back and you look at Ephesians 5, both headship and submission, both husband and wife get to play the role of Jesus in their

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marriage.
Jesus in his sacrificial submission or Jesus in his sacrificial authority to their spouse.
So, how do we work against sin, which happened in the Garden of Eden, where the oneness, because of sin, there's separation and fear, lack of vulnerability, cover up.
[28:22] What does it look like in practice? What is this gender role and difference? What does it mean in actual practice? Now, without your pen and your paper, because, actually, don't do that, because I'm not going to give you a list at all.

This is, in fact, where it's incredibly frustrating for those who want lists, for those who want rules, for those who want just a job description. You know, Steve, could you whip out a job description and just print one out and send us to it tomorrow and tell me what my role is.
This is where the Bible gives us, I mean, it tells us this and doesn't give us any details. It's what it looks like. Nowhere, nowhere anywhere in the Bible does it say that a wife should stay at home, never have a career, be responsible for the childcare and the cooking.
Neither does it say husbands are the breadwinners, they're to do the home maintenance, manage the finances and choose the family car. Nowhere at all does it say that, at all.
Any such stereotypes are entirely culturally driven. They are not the definition of the traditional Christian marriage at all in any way.
[29:48] In fact, in Jesus' time, there's no way those cultural stereotypes would have worked. The cultural stereotypes that we think in Western civilisation are traditional cultural marriage, traditional Christian marriage, arose out of enlightenment and the industrialised age.

We're flocking to the city and for the first time in history, the man gets up or someone gets up and has got to go to work in a factory. Well, who looks after the kids?
You can't take them to the factory. Before the industrialised age, in an agrarian culture, both husband and wife were in the paddock, as you'll find in most farms today.
They're both in the paddock. They're both doing, well, they didn't have cars, you know, fixing the cart or the camel or whatever it is. They're both doing that work.
You see, the Bible was written for all cultures across the centuries, and so any rigid cultural gender roles have no biblical warrant at all.
[31:00] If you're feeling guilty at all about any of that stuff, you should not. The Bible allows for freedom in the particulars while still upholding the principle.

The basic roles of leader and helper are binding, or if you like, the basic function of leader and helper are binding.
people must work out for themselves how this is expressed in their marriage. The very process of actually going through that is what I think is part of what it means to honour your gender differences.
rather than just walking into it, which most of us do, walk into marriage just assuming the roles that we've inherited without giving it any thought whatsoever as to what the biblical structure of it might be.
And so, husbands, if I can speak to you, some of us may need to work on the leader part of being a servant leader.
[32:25] That is, we're more likely to give in and just go, yeah, whatever, whatever, whatever, whatever. And therefore, when we do that, we're abdicating to the wife to make the decision.

Dig down our heart, we just don't want to have to go there. We don't want to take the responsibility.
And so, for some of us, that's what we need to do. For me, I've had to work on the servant part of the servant leadership in my marriage.
My maleness is that I tend to be, and always have been, someone who has looked outward and looked forward in life.
I tend to be quick to step stand on principle, to be logical in my problem solving, to planning a course of action and getting a job done.
And those gifts have been affirmed not just by Nat, but affirmed by people in life for me, even in my very first job as a 15-year-old.
[33:36] gift. But even those gifts must be balanced because, as it turns out, I should never have locked in the date and venue for our wedding without consulting that.

And in my mildness, I can't even believe it really, that I did it, but in my mildness, I was genuinely surprised that she was shocked and not affirming the decisiveness of it.

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Apparently, I'm frustratingly masculine in my independence. And yet, Nat has continued to affirm my gifting while also on many, many occasions and constantly leaning into me to help me to see the impact of my giftedness, my independence on her and others to balance it out.
And when she leans into that, either frustratingly or really kindly and helpfully, it doesn't matter, either way, the reason that I need to listen is because Nat, like no one else, has experienced the negativity, the sin, the wickedness of my unbalanced maleness.
She sees it in a way that no one else does. and experience it like no one else does. And so she could say to me, you need to know how this felt.
[35:37] and so she pushes me and pushes me and pushes me. Can I say, this is my fifth sermon, I think, on marriage that I've done.

Are we up to number six? I can't remember. Marriage number six. I think it's five. I've been doing the reporting, but Nat and I both together are behind these messages.
She has contributed. I bring in the Hebrew and the biblical stuff, but it is the worked out reality of it that is not just me and my vocation and education, it is us, even if I'm doing the reporting.
so I just want to make that clear. I, as a male, have needed all, I need all the help I can get.
And that's particularly so because I've got four people who are opposite to me in the home. And God knew exactly what I needed. He knew exactly what I needed.
[37:00] I need all the help I can get. And what is incredible is that after nearly three decades, I think, with Nat, I've learnt to look at life from her perspective.

Not in the same way she does, but I will find myself in pastoral scenarios and a whole range of things, and I will come quicker to what Nat's view might be on this scenario.
I did something recently and I listened to my maleness and before I got home and reported to Nat, I knew exactly what I should have done because I knew exactly what she would say.
And she did. Of course, then my sinfulness went into self-justification mode. she has been a strong helper to save me from drifting into, on the one hand, toxic masculinity, and on the other hand, from abdicating my masculinity so that she has to pick up the leadership role.
So husband and wife are there to complement each other. And on a deeper level, we find out who we really are because of our spouse. Because no one can see us the way they see us.
[38:31] They see all of our sins and our failings and our faults and our weaknesses like no other one. And they experience it, they are on the receiving end of it, like no other. And so in marriage, as Nick said last week, marriage a truth, loving commitment and grace, a person who is like me but opposite me, that person is healing me.

They're shaping me. And it goes both ways. You know, recently Nat was frustrated with an issue and to do, I didn't know what the issue was, I actually can't be who it was, but there was this issue where, I think it was at work where she needed to fire off an email and she actually was so passionate about it, she said, I'm just going to send him an email.
And I said, hang on a bit, maybe just sleep on it for a bit. Or maybe just draft something and send it to me and then I'll have a look at it and maybe send it tomorrow.
And she did. I looked at it, I came up with a few edits, sent it back to her and she said to me, I'm so glad that you said that to me and your edits were just the right wording and I sent it off.
You see what's happened there? Nat and I swapped roles. That is, she became like me in the first instance and I was like her, she taught me to do that. She taught me to hang on a bit, sleep on it.
[40:08] I hope I've given her a little bit more than just I'm going to fire off an email. But hopefully the decisiveness at that point or taking initiative at that point might be a helpful thing, I don't know.

But it goes both ways. Now let me just say, while the practical details are missing in Ephesians 5, the principles of how authority and submission work out are not missing.
So I'm going to mention four things and I want to mention them from the negative of what submission and headship and authority are not.
So first of all, the husband's authority, like the authority of Jesus over his church, is never used to please himself but only to serve the interests of his wife.
That is, a headship does not mean a husband simply makes all the decisions and it certainly doesn't mean he gets his own way in every disagreement.
[41:16] Why? Because Jesus never did anything to please himself. A servant leader must sacrifice his wants and his needs and particularly blokes for your own personal advancement, in order to build up and to please your spouse.

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Secondly, a wife in her submission is never meant to be merely compliant but is to use her resources to empower.
She is to be her husband's most trusted friend, counsellor, and corrector as he is hers. To complement each other means husband and wife need to hear each other out, they need to make their arguments, and they need to discern a way forward.
Now, that's hard. It's hard work and it involves loving disagreement with affection until you sharpen, enrich, and enhance each other on multiple occasions in our life together.
The course of action that we have gone as a couple and that I've made the call on to go on. Nat has sharpened that decision, hasn't ultimately changed the direction, but brought so much nuance and sharpened it in such a way that the actual, if you like, execution of the decision has been entirely hers, her making, even if the decision, the direction was mine.
[43:15] You see, the wife must bring every gift and resource that she has to the discussion and the husband must, as any wise leader should, know when to allow his wife's expertise to trump his own and his own less well-informed opinion.

That is, a servant leader means, and any secular book on this will tell you, means to be a servant leader, you cannot always be the smartest man in the room.
In fact, you ought not be. Number three, Ephesians 5 does not mean a wife is not to give a husband unconditional obedience when it says the words, in everything.
No human being should give any other human being unconditional obedience. As Peter says, we must obey God rather than man. a wife, let me be clear on this, a wife should not obey or aid a husband in doing things that God forbids, such as breaking the law, or obey him in abusing her in any way, what's safe, or any form whatsoever.
For example, if a husband physically abuses his wife, the strong help that you become in that moment, that you should exercise as a wife, is to love and forgive your husband in your heart, but you should also call the police and have him arrested.
[44:58] You should do both. Absolutely do both. It is never kind, it is never loving to anyone to make any form of excuse for wrong behaviour.

And there is no sense in Ephesians 5 that the husband can in any way, shape, form, order his wife around in daily life. Nothing in Ephesians 5 would lead you to conclude that.
He has no right to order her to wash the dishes. no right to order her to go to work. No right to order her to stop going to work.
No right to order her not to go to church or to a community group. He has no right to order her to have sex. No right to order her to have anything at all, do anything at all.
That's not what headship is. Number four, husbands assuming the role of headship is only done for purposes for serving your wife and family.
[46:13] Can we understand what headship is now? Can we understand what the authority is? It's only for the purpose of serving. It's not for dominating in any way whatsoever. Headship means the husband can only overrule if he spouse, sorry, overrule his spouse if he is sure that her choice would be destructive to her or to the family.

And I would say in the moment of overruling you would do so with the counsel of others before you overrule. That is headship is never to be used selfishly to get your own way about the colour of the car that you're going to buy.
who gets to hold the remote for TV. whether you know headship doesn't mean you get to choose whether you have the night out with the boys or whether you should stay home and help the wife with the kids and the washing and the kids and whatever else.
Headship is an important and a practical principle. It is a very practical principle. principle. It is not about superiority at all.
It is just a very practical principle because with the equality of husband and wife there is only two votes in marriage.
[47:50] So how does a stalemate get broken? With two votes. and two votes without someone having to give way and make their vote null and void.

You see in a healthy marriage this stalemate scenario are broken because each will try to give the other his or her pleasure.
that's how it's broken in a healthy marriage. And in that sense what it means is that what you discover is that the more that you follow this pattern the whole idea of headship becomes very rare

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indeed.
in fact I would say that in the 27 and a half years I've been married this idea of the exercise of my headship in our marriage has happened you could count them you could count them on two hands maybe most likely one hand I've had to exercise headship.
That's all. It's not happening Monday to Sunday. It's a very rare occasion. And it's an occasion when Nat and I can't agree but a decision must be made.
[49:24] And in one such case because there are some times where you can't agree and you can't not make a decision. You know like husband and wife are at star might loggerheads as to the education of their children.

You can't not make a decision. At some point you're going to get a phone call or letter from the government. Why are your kids not enrolled? They're 17. They haven't been to school. You've got to make a decision.
in one such case of that stalemate it resulted in me making a decision and it was a decision that ultimately was to trust in Nat's superior knowledge and experience.
The stalemate was broken when I went actually Nat's got the best idea. Now you might say well hang on a bit isn't that just another way of saying that the stalemate was ended because Nat made the decision?
Not at all. Not at all. I made the decision because course I did not change my view.
[50:51] I still held my view but I said for the sake of Nat and in fact our kids at this point her view is the best way forward.

It's the best exercise of servant leadership. And we endorse her view deciding in her way I took full responsibility for that decision from that moment.
And at no point have I ever gone back and said told you so. Told you so. The husband is to weigh the wife's argument in the stalemate with her.
Get his wife to help him consider and primarily blokes you need your spouse to help you. You need your wife to help you consider your motives not the logic of your arguments because the motive that's deep inside of your heart is a motive that's going to push you towards independence and you need your spouse to help you understand your motives.
And then you make a decision that serves your wife and your family the best. So servant leadership works to complement relational independence.
[52:29] Headship is about sacrifice and responsibility. So I've taken all the time and I just want to say one last thing. Where do we get the power for all of this? And especially if right now and I can say even if your spouse is not on board with you for this right now you still have the power to start moving in the direction by God's design in your marriage.

marriage because the power that comes from it is ultimately not just embracing each other but by being embraced by the ultimate other.
The one who is ultimately different to us. The gender differences are seismic. The sin in our hearts tends to respond by assigning moral significance to those differences when the differences are really deeply temperamental.
And Jesus gives us the pattern to make it work but also the power to change our hearts towards each other. And that power is simply this. It's the gospel. You should have picked this up in Ephesians when we're in Ephesians but Jesus Christ embraced his church.
He embraced that which was completely other than him. Sinful nature. Sinful humanity. As being humans we are not just simply different from him.
[54:06] We are fundamentally opposed to him as God. And yet he took on human flesh and he drew close. He didn't exclude us by simply from the heights of heaven casting us away consigning us to eternal judgment for rebellion against him.

He took on human flesh and embraced us ultimately by dying on the cross in our place for our sin. For Jesus to embrace hostile humanity required of him the greatest sacrifice of all. He had to experience the rejection of his father.
He was excluded so that we could be brought in. And sometimes maybe too often spouses experience betrayal rejection and attacks and the easiest thing to do in that moment is to withdraw and leave.
And in some instances for your own safety you do need to. But the place that you cling to in every instance where that happens is the knowledge that Jesus never did.

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[55:28] And he never will. He embraced us, he loves us and still does. And what that means is it enables us to embrace rather than exclude our spouse with all the mysterious and often infuriating differences there are between us.

in the gospel of Jesus Christ we have profound security that frees us from the natural human impulse that seeks to despise anyone who is different to us, to negate it, to demean it, to put it down.
and that's especially the case our spouse. Marriage is often painful and it is always complicated but it helps us grow and mature in ways that no other experience in this world can produce.
It also brings about deep oneness and self-knowledge and change because of the profound complementarity there is between the sexes.
The tender serving authority of a husband's headship and the strong gracious gift of a wife's submission restore us to who we're meant to be at the very creation.
[56:55] And by accepting our gender roles and operating within them we are able to demonstrate to the world, to the unbelieving world, concepts that are so counterintuitive as to be virtually completely unintelligible!

Concepts of God, of his nature, of who he is in the gospel, completely unintelligible unless they are lived out by men and women in Christian marriage.

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