

Grab your Bibles and open them up to Genesis 2. We continue our household rules today, moving from wives to husbands. Today we tackle the concept of what it means to be a Christian husband, OR how does our faith in Jesus Christ affect the way that husbands are to act. **Colossians 3.19** tells us:

Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

As we have been talking about, these household rules represents what our family relationships should look like now that we have taken on the new life. As we have died to our old self and taken on the character of our savior, WE WILL CHANGE. Our lives have a different aim, so they will also be composed of a different character. That said...

The two big ideas in this verse:

1. Husbands love your wives
2. Do not be harsh with them

Do not seem like ideas that are far detached from the ideas of the world. Any family counselor worth paying will tell you that for a marriage to work, it requires at least some amount of love. It also requires husbands who are willing to restrain their anger. So at first glance, this verse doesn't seem to be asking much more of us than any Romantic Comedy might ask of its leading man. SHOW UP, DON'T BE A JERK, AND MAKE HER FEEL SPECIAL. But as we will see, the Bible does not let husbands off the hook with simply not messing it up. Don't be dumb is a prerequisite, but it isn't the whole ballgame. Instead, the definition of the husband's role is built into creation, clarified in Paul's letters, and ultimately, finds it's fullest, most complete picture in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

We'll start back in creation. In Genesis 2, beginning with verse 5, we see the creation of man:

When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good

for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**And then jump ahead to 15.** The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

We see that God forms Adam out of the ground, and then breathes into Him the breath of life. This is a beautiful picture of God’s relationship to human beings. We see this in both the creation of man and woman, God goes in and gets His hands dirty. While with the rest of creation He simply spoke it into existence, with the man and woman, we see Him forming and animating. He takes this special care because people were not just another thing to create. God did not just create people in the same way, for the same purpose as everything else. People were specifically created in the image of God. **Genesis 1.27** says:

God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

This idea of the image of God is HUGELY important to our identity as human beings. As human beings, we have, like God, the ability to reason, love, and have a will. But the image of God also has implications beyond what we are like, it also informs what WE ARE TO DO. And so the following verse gives us the specific role of human beings on this earth:

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

The specific role for people within the created order are to:

1. Be fruitful and multiply
2. Subdue the earth
3. Have dominion, or rule over it

Genesis 1 is this bird's eye view of creation, whereas Genesis 2 focuses in on the creation of men and women. And in the creation of man from Genesis 2 we see that God gave the commands to Adam before Eve was ever formed. We see Adam placed in the garden, to work it and to name all of the animals. We also see the God's command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was given directly to Adam. Human beings have been given a specific place and role within creation, and we see this role being handled (albeit not well) by Adam before the creation of Eve. All this to say:

1. work is not a result of sin, we were a people made for work.
2. The responsibility to fulfill the cultural mandate is primarily Adam's weight to bear. It existed for him before Eve was created to HELP him accomplish it. THEY do it together, but HE is the responsible party.

He was given the command. Husbands are the leaders of the family, and as leaders are responsible for the health. Hear that husbands, the cultivation of the household is your job. This means that if the household is unhealthy, YOU ARE THE ONE CALLED TO ACCOUNT.

Now, this can seem very unfair. In the same way that the word SUBMIT, sends shivers down the spine of a twentieth century wife, RESPONSIBILITY is a curse word for the husbands. We want to believe that responsible means that we do what we can. Try hard. Do our best. But the reality is, responsible means, husbands are the ones who act to keep the household healthy AND take the heat when it isn't. And we see at the Fall, that it is Adam that God calls out to give an account for what had happened. Adam is the one who God comes to answer for the sin of the world.

Just like most of us, Adam wants to cry foul. He points at Eve and says, 'it was her.' He puts it back on God by saying, 'you gave her to me.' But in the end, none of his whining and complaining gets him anywhere. And the truth is, it wouldn't really matter anyway. If God decided, you know what Adam, you're right. Eve did lead you astray. I did give you a woman who was tricked as you stood right next to her and said nothing. Okay, it's her fault. THE RESULTS OF SIN WOULD STILL BE THERE. Adam's little games of who is at fault does nothing to change the fact that God's law that had been given to Him had been trampled on, and all of creation was now broken.

The reason I say this is because I get sick and tired of counseling married couples who want to talk about nothing other than how this person that God gave me is making it hard for me. You don't know what she is really like. All of our problems are her fault. She doesn't want to have sex with me anymore. Blah, blah, blah. Most of the time, people are coming to counsel hoping for the counselor to pick a winner in this fight. THERE IS NO WINNER. The moment you begin to think this way, you have lost. Instead of viewing the two of you working toward a common goal, you have You have begun to view the other half of yourself as a hindrance rather than a help. You are viewing what God has given to you for One flesh can not be healed except by both parts working together toward a common goal.

Look, I understand. I'm married. Right now, we are living in an apartment with four children AS we remodel a house. If you go down the list of biggest stressors on a marriage, I am currently in the midst of many of them. And my wife and I do not see eye to eye on everything. We disagree on things diverse as where we should live, to what light fixture would look best in the bedroom. I say this not to paint some beautiful picture of what we are fighting through, but to let you know, we are struggle with this too. It's a battle. If you thought that brining two sinful people together to make one flesh, thus multiplying the sin factor, would make life easy, then you're a fool. Marriage is hard work. It's hard work because sin is a disease, and we all have it.

In **Genesis 3.17–19** we see the curse that God gave to Adam at the Fall. In this we see why this is so hard. It says:

And to Adam he said,  
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife  
and have eaten of the tree  
of which I commanded you,  
'You shall not eat of it,'  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust,

and to dust you shall return.”

As curses usually go, not very uplifting. What we see here is that the whole earth is cursed because of Adam. Everything is affected because of the husband’s unwillingness to lead. But also within this, we see that what is affected is the very task that God gave to Him. As God put Adam in the garden, He put him there to WORK IT AND KEEP IT. The subdue it and rule it. But it no longer wants to be subdued and ruled. The very earth is fighting against this order. As simple way to put it is:

Because of sin, the rhythm of life that God has called man to do is now hard.

This isn’t just about gardening. This is about everything. The earth is more difficult to cultivate, and so is your wife. It isn’t natural anymore. It doesn’t just happen. IT IS HARD. And our inclination when we find it hard is to find a new rhythm. To find a new way of doing things that fits this broken world. A system that fits us better, and one that is easier for us to attain. But what we see Paul calling us to in Colossians is not to create a new structure, but to return to the created order, exemplified in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ that we see how all of this talk of responsibility, cultivation, and leadership are connected to the Biblical idea of love.

**Ephesians 5.25–30** connects these dots for us:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might **sanctify her**, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that **she might be holy and without blemish**. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. **He who loves his wife loves himself**. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

This is the gut check verse for all husbands. Colossians simply told us that we were to love our wives and to not be harsh. But here we see what the definition of that word love really is. In these verse we are given a complete picture of love, one that is tied to the greatest act of love in the history of the world. In Jesus we see a love that is not just MORE than how we think of love, it is other. In the gospel (and in this passage) we see five elements of Biblical love for the husband.

**SACRIFICIAL LOVE**

Sacrifice, giving of yourself for the benefit of others is the first part of love. Love is not about what we get, or even what we give. LOVE IS ABOUT WHAT WE GIVE UP. It is about the parts of ourself that we are willing to part with because we care more deeply about the other person than we do about defending some part of us. Jesus gave this description of love in **John 15.12–13**. Of all of the aspects of love that He could highlight, he chose sacrifice:

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

We see this played out in the life of Jesus Christ. The love of Jesus Christ was not just about healing people and making them feel better. Jesus Christ came to actively die in place of sinners. Jesus sacrificed Himself so that we could have life. His death was necessary for our joy. He emptied Himself of what was rightfully His, so that, we could share in His glory.

Husbands are called to do the same thing. No, not die. And no, not become the savior of your wife. But to pursue her without ANYTHING holding you back. Be willing to give up those things that you have always loved: sports, possessions, food, even friends, that interfere with your ability to love your wife as Christ loved the church.

I know it sounds harsh. And most sociologists and even Christian counselors will tell you that you need your guy time and it is healthy to maintain your hobbies and loves apart from your wife. UNLESS THEY ARE NEGATIVELY AFFECTING YOUR MARRIAGE. Too often I hear guys defending their hunting trips and wives who feel like they can't say anything because that is his hobby. When you get married you have a new hobby, to get back to the were both naked and unashamed. That is what your goal is. And if you fantasy football team is keeping that from happening, it needs to be sacrificed. Jesus gave up His life, you can give up World of Warcraft. Love is sacrificial.

### **SANCTIFYING LOVE**

Most people who get married do not spend their wedding day focused on the fact that they are entering into a relationship that God created to change both of them. There might be recognition that small adjustments will have to be made, but few see the purpose of marriage as loving sanctification. OR as the subtitle to one of my favorite books on marriage states: **What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?**

In Jesus Christ, we see this as the purpose for His life. He came to sanctify His people, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. He died do that we could be free from the consequence of our sin. But it does not end there. Sanctification is the change that happens in us because of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Jesus prays that His people continue to be sanctified in **John 17.17**:

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Husbands, you are the overseer of sanctification in your homes. Your kids will play a part in sanctifying you, your wife will sanctify you, but God holds husbands responsible for the spiritual growth and maturing of their household. It is why one of the qualifications of elders is that they manage their household well. And the tool for sanctification that Jesus refers to is the Word. Does the Word penetrate your home? Do you read it yourself? Do you make time for your wife to spend some time with God? Are the words of God on your tongue? We have the power of the Holy Spirit to change us, and the revelation of the Word at our fingertips, are you making use of these weapons to fight for the spiritual health of your family? Love is sanctifying.

### **PROTECTING LOVE**

Whether or not you are prepared to fight, I can promise you that Satan is ready and waiting, prowling like a lion, ready to devour your marriage. Protecting your marriage requires both shoring up defenses before the attacks come, AND taking responsibility when they do.

God set forth a plan for salvation before the foundations of the world. He protected His people by making a way that His church might be holy and without blemish, before man was ever created. When sin entered the world, He acted to take the responsibility for it. He took the sins of the world upon Himself. The plan that had been set forth still had to be enacted. He set up protection, but once sin was present and damning, He put the weight of the burden on His shoulders and nailed it to the cross with Him, protecting His people once and for all from the penalty of sin.

In marriage, the husband is tasked with protecting his family from the points of vulnerability. Adam may not have been the one deceived by Satan, but in Genesis 3.6 we see that he was with Eve when she took the fruit and ate it. He was standing right there. He could have stopped it. He could have grabbed the snake like the Crocodile Hunter and choked it out. But he did NOTHING. It is not loving to allow your wife to continue in sin. You may think it makes her happier,

but it won't. You must be willing to do the hard work of lovingly protecting your wife from sin, even her own.

This means having the hard conversations with your wife before they become impossible conversations. It means making unpopular decisions and drawing difficult lines that are necessary for the health of the marriage. And when other people get mad because you aren't coming to their party, or when your mother can't understand why you don't visit as much, you make sure that the frustration and bitterness are handled by you and not passed off on your wife. You protect the one flesh as if it were your own body, because oh, by the way, IT IS. Love protects.

### **INITIATING LOVE**

Just as husbands have failed to do anything when it comes to protecting, they often fail to do ANYTHING. What I mean is, too many husbands are sitting around waiting for their wives to tell them what to do. Reacting to your wife's desires can be loving, but it is also can be cowardly and lazy. Husbands need to carry the burden of making decisions, even if they are the wrong ones. As the leaders of the household, it is up to the husbands to step out and blaze the trail.

In the gospel, we see that Jesus Christ did not wait for us to be asked to be saved (gave himself up for her). He acted because He loved us and knew what we needed. **Romans 5.8** tells us:

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Husbands we need to become better initiators. We see a problem and act on it, even though we would rather let it sit. We initiate romance. We initiate conversation. We initiate prayer. We initiate Bible reading. Your wife may take care of it, but if that is the case, she is carrying a burden she was not designed for. I am not saying that wives are not able to handle it, but I am saying that it was not the created order and it breeds resentment. Wives who feel like they are the only one who cares about the emotional, spiritual, and physical health of the marriage. C'mon guys, give your helper something to help. Love initiates, it doesn't just react.

### **NURTURING LOVE**

In marriage the union of the two should be more than the two individuals ever were. This is because the two support and grow together. Just as the work of



man was to tend the garden and keep it, the greatest role of husband is to tend and keep his wife. To nurture her. I saw a church sign one time that said, 'Real love loves you as you are.' Sounds good, but that is not how God loves us. He loves us enough to see as we will be and to work to get us there.

In the gospel, we see that Jesus Christ not only justified us and works to sanctify us, but He made His people beautiful. We had nothing, and He made us one with Himself so that we could have hope and ultimate fulfillment. We were abhorrent sinful idolaters, and He made us new, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor.

Husbands, we cannot cleanse our wives hearts, or unite her to Christ, but we can make her beautiful. A wife is made beautiful when she is confident in the love of her husband. She can submit to His leadership when she is protected and sure that his leadership is based in Jesus Christ. She blossoms when her identity is in Christ, she is sure of her husbands love, and her unique personality is encouraged.

Husbands, we have work to do, but let me encourage you:

If you sacrifice your desires for hers, you will show that you desire her.  
If you work to cultivate her soul, you will ground your love in Jesus Christ.  
If you protect her, you will show that you see her as worth fighting for.  
If you pursue her, you will let her know that you that she is a treasure worth pursuing.

If you nurture her, you will show that you care about her more deeply than just what she is. You care about who she is deeply and want to see her beauty realized.

None of this promises a perfect response. It is not, do this and she will respond in this way. But if you don't lead, she will not follow. If you do not love her, if you are harsh with her, she will despise your headship. Just like I said no man can lead a woman who does not submit, it is also true that no woman can submit to a man who does not love her boldly. Ephesians 5 ends:

let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

What we see is that the thing that women really desire: to be loved, will be fulfilled in the one flesh as God designed it. And the thing that men desire most: RESPECT will also be present. God knows you better than you know yourself. Her

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also knows your wife better than you know her. She is His daughter. Take care of what He has given you to steward.