

The Role of a Wife, Part Two

Ephesians 5:22-25

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 6, 2020

Good morning and welcome to another Sunday morning here at Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. We're so happy that you decided to join us online at a time when we're meeting like this; at a time when we're meeting virtually in light of the Coronavirus.

And just to say a few words about that. Just to talk about that a little bit. While we're waiting on the announcement tomorrow from Dr. Bonnie Henry, our provincial Health Officer on whether churches can meet again, I just want to let you know that we're working hard to respond to that. We're working hard right now behind the scenes to get ready for whatever her decision may be. It is a little hard to do that right now because we don't know what her decision will be. It's a little difficult because we're kind of in the dark at the moment. We're just waiting for another day, but we are preparing for whatever eventuality may come. So for example, we've contacted our current landlords, the owners of the facility that we meet in, to see if they would allow us to meet even if the lockdown continues. We've asked them if they would allow us to meet in defiance of the government's orders. I'm not saying that we're going to do that. We haven't made a decision to do that. We don't even know what the government's orders are going to be. So, we're waiting on that. But we were just asking to see what our options are, to see what choices we would have. And they said that they won't let us do that. They do not want us to meet in the current facility if the government does not allow it.

So our deacons are looking for other places to do that. They're looking for other places to meet just in case that needs to be considered. In fact, the Elders and Deacons and Care Group leaders actually met this past week. We had an extended meeting and talked for quite a while about this particular issue. We met to discuss other places to hold Sunday morning services should we need to do that. Also we discussed our response to the whole situation, depending on this announcement tomorrow. One of our doctors also contacted Dr. Bonnie Henry personally to ask her to be consistent in her efforts to fight the Coronavirus. He said that if they're going to let Alcoholics Anonymous groups and Narcotics Anonymous groups meet for support, they should do the same thing for churches; they should do the same thing for us. He was very gracious and very gentle in his tone. But he asked for churches to be given the same consideration. I

I've also been involved in several pastors' meetings recently with men from the Lower Mainland to discuss what everyone's doing with their churches. At this time, we met to discuss what we're doing in light of this upcoming decision. And most of them said they're doing what we are. They're not meeting in light of the government's wishes. But they said if they're asked to do this permanently, if they're asked to not meet for an indefinite amount of time, they're going to resist and they're going to say no, because the church is supposed to meet. There is a biblical mandate to do that. And in fact, it might interest you to know that there was a large pastors' meeting in Abbotsford a few weeks ago, in which this was discussed. And when I say large, it was a large meeting. There were 140 men there - 70 in person and 70 on a zoom call. And if you think about the fact that Chilliwack only has 60 churches in it, you're looking at a large representation of churches in this area when they met. As a result of that meeting, they drafted a letter for the churches to sign calling on the government to open things up. They drafted a letter citing several important documents, such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the

Constitution, to make that request. But all of this is to say there's a lot of work going on behind the scenes right now. You may not be aware of this, but there's a lot of effort going into getting things ready for the government's announcement on Monday from our church and all the churches across British Columbia. We're not sitting still on this. All of the sound churches that I've talked to are not sitting idly by; they're working hard trying to figure out what to do for this time.

And just to be clear for our congregation, I'm not saying that we will defy the government's order tomorrow. I'm not saying we will resist, because again, we don't even know what they're going to ask us to do. We don't know what direction that they're going to go in. But I'm saying we do want to meet as a church. I'm saying that is a high priority for us to be together, and we're trying to figure out how to make that happen right now. We're working hard to try to make that a reality. So please pray for us in that. Please pray for the Elder board and the Deacons as we work together to find solutions to this. We appreciate your support in that.

And I also want to remind you that regardless of the announcement tomorrow, regardless of what's happening with the government, the true church hasn't stopped right now. God's people have not closed or shut down because you can't shut it down. You can't close the bride of Christ. We continue to meet and pray and counsel one another. We continue to preach and teach and proclaim the gospel. Even when it's like this, even when it's done in unusual ways. The Coronavirus hasn't stopped that and hasn't slowed that down because it can't. Even though we're not together right now, we are still busy doing the work of the Lord. We have people right now getting things ready for Christmas. We have different people working with our children, working with our praise team, and doing things to coordinate some of that.

But just to remind you, friends, the church is not a building. It's not a facility, it's about the people that are in it. It's about the souls that are in it. It can be so easy to forget that right now. It can be so easy to get distracted and get our minds turned by every announcement from the government, or every mandate that comes down, because every few days there's another one; or heads turn as this is going on. But the church is not about that. It's about the people. And we want to remember that here at Grace Fellowship.

I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles to a book that discusses this. It says a lot about the church and what it's about. And that is the book of Ephesians. That's the book we're in this morning. So if you would please open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. We're in Ephesians chapter 5, which I would like to read to you before we get started. So, if you would turn to Ephesians 5:14. And following with me, it says this,

For this reason it says,

“Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Just to say a few words about this. I told you last week that the Christmas season is upon us. The holidays are here and in light of that we're looking at a book this morning that's not often discussed right now. It's not often studied at this time of year, during the holidays, because it doesn't say much about the birth of Christ. It doesn't say much about the events that we talk about around Christmas like the angels and the shepherds and the wise men, but it does say a lot about Jesus. This book does say a lot about Him and who he was. And what it says here is that he came to save us.

That's the message of the book of Ephesians. That's what it's about. It says that Jesus came to rescue us from our sins, specifically in the passage I just read to you. He came to rescue our marriage. He came to save our families from sin. When you became a Christian, when He drew you to Christ, it didn't just impact your life; it impacted the lives of those around you, especially your husband and your wife, and your children.

Just so you can see the context for this, if you look in verse 14, which is at the beginning of what I just read to you. Verse 14, says, "For this reason, it says awake, sleeper, and rise from the dead." I've told you before, that's a quotation from several books of the Old Testament. It's a quotation from Psalms and the book of Malachi, to remind you that this is what you need to do in the Christian life. This is what you need to do in your marriage; you need to wake up. You need to rise oh, sleeper. Why? Because that's what Christ has done for you. Because that's what happened when he saved you. He woke you up. He raised you from the dead. And now you need to live like it now. You need to act like it in your family.

Verse 22 says that the best place to do this is in your marriage. Verse 22 mentions wives and husbands because this is a reference to marriage. This is a reference to the family because that's the best place for you to wake up. Which means that if your family is struggling this morning, if it's having a hard time, the best way to help them is this - you need to show them some signs of life, you need to take some initiative, you don't just point fingers at them. You don't just say, "It's the husband's fault. It's the wife's fault. It's the dog's fault. It's the kids fault." Say, "It's my fault." You need to point the fingers at yourself. And the point Paul's making is that you need to do something about it. You need to act like you're alive in your family.

I mention this because so many people today don't get this. I mention this because so many people don't understand; they're so lazy at home, they're so idle there. Because when it comes to their home, when it comes to their family, they don't do anything. They don't put in any effort at all. They just sleep through everything and are

zoned out all the time. Paul says it shouldn't be that way. for Christians. It shouldn't be that way for you as a believer when you're saved. I also mention this because some people today are not asleep at home, they're not lazy, they're just apathetic. They just don't care about their own, or they don't act like they do, because they don't put in any time. They don't put in any effort. All of their time is spent on their job, and their work, and their hobbies. All their time is spent camping, or at the lake, or playing hockey. Paul says you shouldn't be that way either. You need to spend time with your family. You need to spend time with your husband, and wife because you need to wake up. You need to wake up to these things here in this book. Because your family's not going to fix itself. Your family's not going to change itself, is not going to raise itself. You're going to have to do something. You're going to have to take some initiative. And to say it another way, this is what true religion looks like. This is what true Christianity looks like. In Ephesians chapters one to four, Paul is talking about the change that Christ brings into your life, the great difference that He makes in your life. And in chapter five, he says this is where the difference happens. This is where you see it. You see it in the home.

It was Robert Murray M'Cheyne who said, "A hypocrite is a man who's a Christian everywhere, but in his home." That's not the way you want to live. That's not what this book is talking about. The change comes first and foremost at home. So many Christians fail at this point. So many people blow it on this issue. Because they are Christians everywhere but in their home. They act like they're saved everywhere but in their family. I mean, they're nice to people at work. They're nice to people at school. They're nice to people in their neighborhood. But the moment they set foot in the door of their home they act like the devil himself. They act like a demon. They're kind to people. They're gracious to people. They're gentle to people. And then they come home and they kick the dog. We're not supposed to be that way. That's not what God has called you to do as a Christian. This is not an exceptional thing. This is for all of us.

As a believer in Christ, that is not the way you're supposed to live. The Lord wants you to do something else, He wants you to be the same person everywhere. And in order to do that you have to wake up. You have to open your eyes to the reality that there needs to be a change in your home. 1 Peter 5:8, in a very alarming passage of Scripture says this,

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert, because your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

And that's an interesting verse. It is very alarming because it says that the devil prowls around which means that he moves around. And we know the devil is not omniscient or omnipresent. He's not like the Lord Himself or everywhere at the same time. So he has to move from place to place to place. But that's what Peter says that he does, because he wants to devour you, he wants to kill you. And his favorite place to do it is in the home. His favorite place to attack you is in your family. I mean, how many godly men in the ministry have disqualified themselves or their family? How many godly women have disqualified any kind of testimony they've had, because of their family? Well, that's not an accident. That didn't just happen. That was the work of the devil. He loves to attack us, here in the home.

Another verse on 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6 says,

For you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.

There Paul says that you're not of the night, and not of the darkness. So you don't want to act like it anymore. You need to be sober. And the idea of sober there is that you're not intoxicated, your mind is wide awake and focused. And the best place to do it is in your home and in your family. You can't doze off there. You can't fall asleep on the ones you love. Some of you with little kids will know this. Your kids changed so quickly. You can't check out on them. There's not enough time. You lose a year in a kid's life. It's like an eternity.

You could say the same thing about your family, your marriage. You could say the same thing about your relationship with your husband or wife. They need your help. Your family needs you to be awake. Which is what we're going to talk about this morning. So if you're taking notes, from Ephesians chapter five, we're going to talk about staying alert in the family and staying awake. We are going to look at objections to the role of a wife in this passage. That's our outline for today and this is what we're going to talk about. We're going to talk about staying alert in the family by looking at four objections to the role of a wife.

The reason we're talking about this, the reason we're looking at this subject, is because last week, if you remember, we talked about the role of a wife. Last week, we talked about the role of a woman in the home, and what God has called her to do and what the Lord would like a wife to be. But the times are so confusing right now. I mean, this world is so in the grips of the devil that we can't stop there. We can't just present this roll and move on. We've got to talk about some objections to it. We've got to take some time to look at some concerns that people have with this passage.

To tie it into what we just said, this is why you have to be alert. This is why you have to be awake. Because the family is under attack today. I don't have to tell you that the family is under siege. I mean, no matter where you go, no matter what you do, it seems like somebody is saying something against the biblical idea of the family. It's everywhere. Turn on the news. Watch the latest laws coming down from the LGBT group. You'll see it there on the news and the legal system. Watch a television show today. What do you see there? If they talk about the family on a TV show nowadays, they're making fun of it. It's like it's a mockery to them. Any idea of a nuclear family, any idea of a husband and wife raising kids, it's just a mockery. Especially in this area. Especially in the area of a woman's role in the home. So that's why we have to talk about this today. We can't just look at this passage and move on, we've got to spend a week looking at some objections to the role of a wife. We have three of them.

The first one is the objection of abuse. So the first objection to the role of the wife is probably the most serious one we're going to talk about. And that is the objection of abuse. Which means that some people think that what Paul is saying is abusive here. They think that what he's saying in Ephesians 5 is harmful to women because it opens things up for mistreatment. And you can see where they're coming from in that. So we need to say a few words about that. So if you read these verses, again, Paul writes in verse 14, it says,

For this reason it says,

“Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not

get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the ear of Christ.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Paul is telling you to be awake, he's telling you to be alert. He applies this to several areas of the Christian life. He applies this to several things, such as in verse 18, being filled with the Spirit. In verse 19, he applies it to worship and praise, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, another way of saying worship. It's another area we have to wake up in - in our praise, giving praise to God. And then he mentions in verse 22, the family.

This is the next area where you have to do this. He relates to this in verse 22, to the husbands and the wives, "wives be subject to your own husbands." Just to explain so that you know, the word for "be subject" here is translated "submit" in some of your Bibles. Depending on what translation you have, some of them might even say "follow", because that's the idea here. That's the point. He's saying a wife should follow her husband, she should see him as the leader of the home and respond accordingly. She's not the leader of the home, he is. She's not the one providing guidance and direction. That's his job. And it's her job to respect that. And Paul tells you why in the next verse. If you look in verse 23, he says,

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

Paul says that the husband is the head of the wife. I've told you this word 'head', it's the Greek word 'kefali' which means everything that our English word means. It means the upper part of your body, or the part above the neck. But it also refers to the part that gives you leadership and direction. That's the idea here, I mean, your body goes where the head goes. And in a similar way, the husband is the head of the family, he's the leader of the family. He gives direction, because that's how God created it to be. That's how He designed it. In a special way that we can't fully understand, the husband is the head of his wife. In the same way Christ is the head of the church, which means that the husband needs to love his wife the way Christ did. A husband needs to be generous and kind and gracious and sweet and tender hearted and thoughtful with his wife the same way Christ is with His bride. And a wife needs to recognize that.

That's the interplay between the two roles here. The wife needs to see him do that and respond accordingly, because that's her job. I told you last week, that's not the invention of man. That's the invention of God. That's not an idea that Paul came up with himself. That idea came from the mind of God. I was talking with our care group last week over Zoom about this passage and about this doctrine, and one of the members said, "Well, this is really an issue of attitude isn't it. This is really an issue of the heart because a woman can stay home and raise kids and keep the house without doing this. She can do all those things without submitting to her husband because she can do it with a rude and angry attitude. So this is an issue of the heart, isn't it?" And I said, "Absolutely." And this lady who said this was exactly right. A wife needs to respond from the heart to the leadership of her husband.

But as soon as you say that, let's be honest this morning friends, as soon as you say that some objections arise, right? In this day and age, as soon as you say all of what we just said, some concerns come up because it raises

several issues. It raises some questions like, what about abuse? Tell me how does this work when a husband abuses his wife? Sure, this makes sense if he does what he's supposed to. But what if he hits her? This is a serious question. What if he beats her and mistreats her in some way? Sometimes the question is asked like this, "Well, how does this work when a woman's life is threatened? How does this work if she's in danger, or the kids are in danger? What is she supposed to do then? Is she supposed to just take it? How does this work over the issue of abuse?" And that's an excellent question, we need to discuss that.

In 2010, the editor for Charisma magazine, the most popular charismatic magazine in the US, published a book entitled *Ten Lies The Church Tells Women*. This is about 10 lies that the church has told women to keep them down and suppressed. That's what the book was about. And one of them revolved around this issue, the issue of abuse. The author said that a few years ago, Charisma magazine reporter Marcia Ford set out to uncover the reason so much spouse abuse occurs in evangelical churches. She was aware of the statistics, and estimated 4 million women are assaulted each year by their current or former spouses. She also had reason to believe that many of them were Christians and attended a church. But she was surprised to learn after talking with some sources that many of the calls came in concerning abuse were not only from Christians, but they were from pastors wives who said that their husband was beating them. And it's kind of an undercurrent in the book, that one verse they were using to justify that behavior was this one right here. Ephesians 5:22. Wives be submissive, be subject to your husbands.

And the author went on to say that the church has done this for centuries, the church has turned to passages like this to say it's okay for a husband to do that. It's okay for a husband to beat his wife. And I would just say on the front end, I think he's probably right. I think that for centuries, the church has twisted this verse of scripture to justify that, just as it has twisted lots of verses throughout the years. Churches have gotten all kinds of verses in the Bible wrong, but this is one of them. And I would say that they're wrong; the church was wrong in doing that because that's not what this means and nowhere does this passage justify abuse. Nowhere does it say it's okay for a husband to mistreat his wife. In fact, it says the opposite. If you understand what the passage is saying, it says that you have to do the total opposite of that. Verse 24, says,

But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.
Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

Paul says a husband should love his wife, not mistreat her. He says the husband should give himself up for her, not hurt her in any way. He should treat her the way Christ treated the church. Jesus never abused the church ever, ever, ever. On the contrary, he died for the church. And in a similar way, the passage says this is what a husband should do for his wife. For husbands to treat his wife like Christ doesn't teach abuse. Nor does any other passage of scripture. This is really significant.

If you understand the context of the first century, they thought it was okay to abuse their wives. The Jews and even the Romans thought it was okay to hit them. It was okay to do anything you want it to him. They were like property to them. One rabbi said, "It's okay to divorce your wife if she burns the roast", or something to that equivalent. Paul said the total opposite here. He said you should treat your wife like Christ. And we might add that this whole chapter breaks down when a husband doesn't get that. This whole passage breaks down when a husband doesn't understand his part, and he abuses his wife. Because these two things are meant to be taken together, the two roles are meant to coincide. They're like two sides of the same coin or two wings of an airplane. When one wing starts dropping, the other starts to drop as well, and the whole thing comes crashing down. For if

a husband doesn't do his part, a wife can't do hers. And I make a point of this. I'm kind of belaboring this point, because to answer the question, "What is the wife supposed to do when her husband abuses her?" you have to answer that by saying first that he's not supposed to do that. Let's start there. Let's remember that a husband is not supposed to abuse his wife, ever, ever. And when he does, there are consequences. When he does there are terrible results, one of which is that a wife can't do what she's supposed to do. She can't follow a man like that, because how could you do that? How could you follow a man who abuses you? You can't it's kind of like asking the question, "What are you supposed to do when someone murders you?" Well, you're not supposed to murder people. You're not supposed to hurt people like that. You have no good choices. If you do that you have no good options. And it's the same way. When a husband mistreats his wife, this is a sin, this is against the will of God when you do that. And so the whole thing unravels and leaves you with no good options.

In fact this is such a complicated issue, it's so dicey, that you have to ask a lot of questions whenever it comes up for people in our church. If you're helping someone who's in a situation like this, if you're counseling someone or just talking with them, you have got to ask a lot of questions. You have got to do a lot of probing. You can't just assume things. So you have to ask someone who says they're abused, you have to very gently ask them, "Well, what do you mean by abuse? What does that term mean? Do you mean that your husband doesn't bring you flowers every day?" Some women take it in that direction. "Do you mean that he doesn't talk to you as often as you want or in the way that you want? Or do you mean that he hits you?" Those are two different things. They require two different approaches. "Do you mean that he threatens you and put your life at risk?" If he does that, you've got to get involved. If he does that, you've got to bring in some help. You bring the church in, and you've got to bring the police in. It's a totally different issue at that point.

Like I said, these are not easy issues. These are not easy questions, because you're dealing with a terrible, terrible sin. That's why it's so hard. That's why it's so difficult. If sin wasn't involved, this would be an easy issue. If sin was not involved, this would be simple stuff. But sin is involved. And therefore, it's very messy. In fact, it might be helpful just to quickly talk about two passages that talk about this subject just to get our minds around this a little bit. It might be helpful to look at two passages side by side, and I'll just read these to you. You don't have to turn there. One of them is Malachi 2:16. You've probably heard this passage before. Malachi 2:16, says

For I hate divorce, says the Lord.

That's pretty blunt. pretty direct. You don't have to wonder what it means. God hates divorce, He can't stand it. There's never a time when he likes it. There's never a time when he enjoys seeing a family separate. But on the other hand, Deuteronomy 10:17-18 says

For the Lord does not show partiality, nor take a bribe, he executes justice for the orphan, and the widow.

And that's not as straightforward there. It's not as direct. But it means the Lord executes justice for the most helpless of people. The Lord brings justice for the most vulnerable of people because the orphan and the widow had no body. And in a similar way, He will do the same thing for abused wives. The Lord does not show partiality toward a man just because he's a man or a husband, just because he's a husband and let him get away with it. He doesn't let him get away with anything. God will call him call him to account. Both of those passages are true, you have to put them both together and pray for God's wisdom in this, and show some discernment.

You know, the story is told that at a time in WWII a soldier gave a piece of candy to a child, to an orphan on the streets. It was a helpless orphan who said to him, "Mister, no one's ever done this before for me, are you God?" To which the soldier replied, "No, but God so loved the world, and I'm trying to do what He did." And friends you have a very compassionate God. We need to remember that this morning. We have a God who is a very merciful God, He helps those in need. That's his heart. That's who he is. And He will help an abused wife. That's why this passage doesn't teach that. That's why this passage can't teach that, because that's not the heart of God. That's not the character of God to ever, ever, ever allow a man to mistreat his wife. It teaches something else entirely.

Which leads to another point to consider this morning. This leads to another objection to the role of a wife in this passage. The first one is the objection of abuse. The first objection to the role of a wife in this passage is the objection of mistreatment, because that's what Paul teaches here. People think he approves the mistreatment of women, but he doesn't, because that's not the heart of God. Which leads to a second point to consider, another objection to the role of a wife in this passage. And that's the objection of a passive husband. A second objection to the role of a wife in this passage is the objection of a passive husband, which means some people think this passage is canceled out by that as well. They think this passage is canceled out by a passive husband or an indifferent one, a lazy one. Because as the thinking goes, you know, somebody has to lead the home. As the thinking goes, someone has to give it direction. And if the husband won't do it, then the wife should, she should take charge.

If you read it again, verses 21 and 22 say this,

And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

The reason I'm reading this again is that verse 21 is a very important one in the book. It's very crucial to the book of Ephesians, because it sets the stage for all that's going to follow. It sets the stage for everything Paul's going to talk about in the rest of chapters five and six. And he says here that you should be subject to one another. That's what he's telling you in verse 21. The phrase "one another" here refers to one another in the church. It refers to every single Christian, because that's who you should submit to. You should submit to everyone regardless of age, sex, or nationality. You shouldn't play favorites. You shouldn't play partiality and say, "Well, I'm going to serve this one, but not that one." You can't do that in the church, Paul says. Then he relates it to wives in verse 22, he ties it into their lives because this really would have been hardest for them. This would have been the most challenging for the women in the church. Because it's one thing to submit one day a week, but it's another thing to have to do it the rest of the time. It's one thing to submit and be subjected to others when you're in the house of God with your friends on a Sunday, it's another thing to do it when you go home. That's more difficult. And so Paul starts there with the wives, he mentioned them first.

We might add that it's even harder when your husband is passive in it. It's even harder to submit when he's lazy or just doesn't care. Because then there's nothing to submit to. There's nothing to follow with a man like that. When all he does is get up and go to work and come home and watch TV and go to bed, and then the next day he gets up, goes to work, comes home, watches TV and goes to bed, then the next day he gets up, goes to work comes home, watches TV, and goes to bed. And it's just an endless cycle of that. That's hard to do. And it's very difficult to do. All without talking to you, all without saying a word.

Some women see that and they think it means that they need to take the husband's place in the home. And you can understand where they're coming from. They see that and they think it means God is calling them to take over and be the surrogate man, to be the surrogate leader. We have a saying in counseling that women love to nag, and men love to neglect. And it's true, it's absolutely true. Because every time a couple comes in for counseling, you can bet that this is what it's about. She is nagging him, and he's neglecting her. She wants to tell him what to do and boss him around and lead him, and he wants to let her do it because he doesn't care. He just wants peace. He just doesn't want to fight or want to bother. Which is a sin. It's wrong for both of them to act that way. They're both usurping each other's roles. And just to give you an example of this so you can see what I'm talking about. If you look in verse 25, Paul writes,

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

We're going to talk about this later on. I'm going to explain this passage to you and in detail later when we're in the book of Ephesians, a little bit down the road, because there's some important stuff here for the husband very rich stuff. But what I just want you to see here is that this is the husband's role in the home. This is what God has called him to do. Verse 26, says he's called "to wash her with the word." In other words, his leadership is a spiritual leadership. His leadership is a heavenly leadership, essentially. Because it's his job to teach the Bible to her. It's his job to bring the Word of God to bear in his wife's life. That's why this is so different from abuse, so far away from that. When she's upset or confused or troubled about something he's supposed to bring the Bible to bear in her mind; he's supposed to take her back to Scripture. And it's her job to follow him in that. It's her job to respond to that. Yet how many men don't do this? How many men fail to teach the Bible to their wives, or bring it to their attention, or even bring it up at all because their minds are so focused on their iPhones? Or they are so focused on their work, or their office, that they don't even pick up a Bible throughout the week, let alone teach it to their wife. They don't even look at the Word of God, let alone cleanse her with it.

That's a plague in our society today. That's the pandemic - passive men in the church. And some wives look at that and here is the difficulty they fall into. Some wives look at that and they say, "Well, what are we supposed to do when that happens?" They look at their husbands do that. And they say, "Well, how are we supposed to respond? We're supposed to follow him. We're supposed to be under his leadership. How are we? How can you be under the leadership of man like that?"

I want to ask you to turn in your Bibles to another book for just a moment. I you would put your finger in the book of Ephesians and turn over to the book of First Peter, with me. Turn over to the book of First Peter. First, Peter is a book we looked at when I first came to Grace Fellowship. We studied it three years ago. It's about suffering, the whole book is about suffering. And in relation to that Peter relates suffering to the wives. And he says this in 1 Peter 3:1

In the same way you wives be submissive to your own husbands, so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, because they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

I want to stop there and say a few words about that. In this passage, Peter answers the question, “What do we do with the passive husband?” He answers the question on what to do if your husband is shirking his duty in the home and not leaving you the way supposed to, if he's disobedient to the word. Peter says, he's still your husband. I am kind of reading between the lines here, but it's pretty evident. He's still the leader of the family, this doesn't change that because that's an objective thing, a positional thing. Sin doesn't nullify it, sin doesn't cancel it out. So the wife can't step in and take over.

Instead, if you notice, you're to do something else as a wife, you should try a different approach. And that is to win him over without a word. It doesn't mean you don't talk to your husband. It doesn't mean you don't relate to him verbally. What it means is you should win him over without nagging him. You should win him over without giving him advice and coaching him and lecturing him. Instead, Peter says you should do it with your behavior. This is very different from the way most of us look at this, this is very different from the way most of us think of helping people. Because most of us, men and women alike, we think that we help someone by talking. We think we can help people by just chatting at them. Peter says the opposite here. He tells wives to take a different approach, to win their husbands over with their behavior. This can be a real problem in homes where the wife is farther along in the faith, or even maybe where she is saved and he isn't. Because there can be a tendency for her to try to bring him along. There can be a tendency for her to try to become his mentor, or his spiritual life coach. Peter says you can't do that because that would be taking his place. You can't do that because that would be putting yourself as leader of the home. Instead, you need to try another way. You need to do it with your deeds and your actions. You guys have heard the phrase actions speak louder than words. Well, it's true. People see what you do more than what you say. And it's the same way here. In fact, this is so important. It's such a big deal, because I've talked to several men who said that they became a Christian because of their wives. They came to faith in Christ because of what their wives did, because of their godly behavior. But I've never talked to a man who said he became a Christian because his wife nagged him. I never heard of a man who said he became a Christian, because his wife lectured him into it. There's something in the heart of a man that resists that. There's something in the nature of a man that bumps up against that. So Peter says to don't do that. Don't try that approach. Instead, win him over without a word. Let your husband see the change in you. Let him see the difference in you, and let that impact him. This is not easy to do. I mean, this is hard. This takes time. This takes patience. This takes resisting the urge to poke and prod him. But this is what pleases the Lord. This will improve your prayer life, ladies. This will make you pray for your husband more. And make you pray for yourself as well because this is not easy. But if the Lord called you to do it, He will get you through it.

There is at least one more point to consider this morning. One more objection to the role of a wife. In this passage, we've already talked about some deep ones here, some some big ones. The first one is the objection of abuse. The first objection to the role of a wife in this passage that we often hear about is the objection of abuse. Some people think that what Paul says is abusive here or harmful to women. But it's not, because that goes against the nature of God. God does not operate that way. He would never tell a man to do anything to hurt a woman.

Second, there's the objection of a passive husband. The second objection to the role of a wife in this passage is the objection of a passive husband. Which means that some people think this passage is canceled out by that as well, they think it's canceled out by a passive or indifferent husband. Because as the thinking goes, someone has to lead the home, someone has to guide it. So if the husband doesn't do it, the wife should take over. But the Bible doesn't say that either. It tells us to take a different approach and win him over without a word.

That leads to one more point to consider today. One more objection to the role of a wife in this passage. This is the most common one of all, because it encompasses all the other ones; it kind of puts them all together. And that is the objection of culture. A third objection to the role of a wife in this passage is the objection of culture. Which means that some people think this passage is canceled out by culture because the culture doesn't like this. I don't have to tell you that. The lost world does not approve of a passage like this. Some would say that we should listen to them and follow the world. We should listen to them and do what they do. And we don't have to say too much about this one, because it's so self-evident. But as you read verse 22, you can just tell by reading it that this is unpopular. You can just tell by reading this, this is offensive to some people. "Wives be subject to your own husbands", you don't have to even go past that. And you hear what some people say, "Well, who believes that? I mean, who teaches this anymore?" Some of you may be saying that. You read that and say, "Aren't we past this as a society? Aren't we beyond this, because we've evolved, we've made progress. After all, this is 2020. This is the modern age. This is the Age of Enlightenment" which is an ironic thing to say in a year like this. It's an ironic thing to say that this is an enlightened year of progress in 2020. "This feels prehistoric if you ask me." People say that all the time, you hear that a lot.

Let me just say that it's got the church's attention. It's got the church's attention because there are churches who have abandoned a biblical view of a woman. There are churches that have abandoned what this verse says, because it's not popular to the culture. It's even grown to the point that you see women leading the church today. It's grown to the point that in some circles, you see women preaching and calling themselves Pastors and Elders. You see it right here in Chilliwack, which is a direct violation of Scripture. It's a direct violation of passages like 1 Timothy 2:12 which says God does not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man.

The problem is, how far do you take that? The problem with this train of thought, of following the culture, is how far do you follow them? How long do you go down that road? Let me tell you, it won't stop here. It won't stop with ignoring a passage like this, it's going to go farther. They'll want to change other things too, like what a woman is. The culture is going to change or want to change what a man and a woman is by nature, by definition. Since it has abandoned God, since the culture has rejected Him, it rejects what God says about the human identity. They want to change it with a procedure. They want to change sexuality with a surgery and some pills. And the culture wants to change who you can marry as well. They want to change the nature of the family. So a man can marry a man and a woman can marry a woman. And they want to change the laws to coincide with that. They want to change the courts to accommodate them and it's just change, change, change. It's just sin, sin sin. And the question you have to ask yourself friends is how far is the church going to take that?

The question we need to wrestle with is how far are we willing to go down that road? Where do you draw a line? Where do you say enough is enough? And I would say we should do it here. I would say we should draw a line in a chapter like this. Because if you don't do it here, where do you do it? If you don't do it with the family where do you start? We need to say that this is God's word. And that's it. This is what the Bible says. And that's final. Listen, friends, the culture is not getting better. I don't think I have to tell you that. I think you know that. But the world is not making progress, despite what they might tell you. Despite what they might say, they're not enlightened, they're in the dark, completely in the dark. So you can't follow them in this. You can't be influenced by what they say. You have to turn to the Word of God for the role of the wife, and for the role of the husband, and for the role of kids, for the role of everything, because the family was his invention. J.C. Ryle once said that the Bible in the pulpit must never supersede the Bible at home. We have to teach the Bible in the home before we

teach it anywhere else. And we have to put it above all the writings and teachings of men, it must be followed at all costs.

Which leads me to ask you this morning friends, do you get that today? Do you believe that? Do you believe the Bible should be followed at all costs? Do you believe the Bible in the pulpit should never supersede the Bible at home because it's God's Word to us? Because this is what God wants us to do. And that's final. There's no compromise in that. There's no giving in, no matter how unpopular it is. Do you believe we should please God above all else in these things? Friends, I ask you that. Let me tell you what will happen. If you don't have that conviction, it will lead you into sin. It will lead you into disaster. Because it will just be one change after another, it will never stop. It will change your home. It will change your family. It will change what a man and a woman is. You've got to draw a line somewhere. Let's just draw it here. Let's start with the family.

To ask this in another way, is this a hard passage for you to read? Is this a hard passage for you to study because you can relate to these objections, you can relate to these concerns? Do you struggle with thinking this text is abusive? Do you struggle with thinking it's harsh and cruel to women?

On the other hand, do you struggle with a passive man? Do you struggle with submitting to a lazy one or an indifferent one? I mean, is that what your home life is like? And is that hard for you because you want to take over, because you want to take control of the house in his place? I ask you that because if so I want you to know that I understand that struggle. I ask you that because if you do struggle with that, I want to let you know that I'm sympathetic to that. That's why I preached this sermon this morning. That's why we're talking about this. But if that's the case, and you're wrestling with it, let me tell you what you need to do about it. You've got to remember that your authority is the Word of God. You have to remember that your authority is the Bible, above and beyond anything. It's your authority above the culture. This is your authority above the lost world. This is your authority above your feelings. It is the authority above everything. You want to please God not man. You want to please Him and not anyone else. And the Bible says that a wife needs to submit to her husband. That's what the text says. It says that she needs to follow Him and respect his leadership at home, and it says that a husband needs to love his wife the way Christ loves the church. He needs to give himself up for her and serve her and wash her with the Word. It all goes back to this. It all goes back to the Bible.

You know in my studies this week I came across a story of a time when an atheist confronted a Christian for reading her Bible. He told her it's so outdated, it's so old fashioned and irrelevant. He said that nobody reads it anymore because it's a bad book. The Christian replied this, "Mister, a little while ago my brother was an idler, a gambler, a drunkard, and he made such a noise in the bar that no one could stand him. But since he began to read the Bible, and believe the Gospel, he works a nine to five job. He no longer goes to the bar. He no longer touches beer, or whiskey, or alcohol. He brings home money to his poor wife and poor mother. And our life at home is quiet and delightful. Mister can you tell me this? How can a bad book produce such good fruit?" She's right. She's absolutely right. No other book can do what the Bible does to a man. No other book can produce such good fruit. It's truly one of a kind. It's truly unique, because it is the Word of God. It's not outdated. It's not irrelevant. This Book can change your life. It can change your home. It can change your family, if you would just read it and believe. We can do that today. Will you believe the words of this Book? Let me pray that you would, and God would give you the grace to do so. Let's pray.

Father, if there is anything that we need today, as we read a passage like this, and think of the implications of it and just think of our world, we need faith. We need the faith of the ancients. We need faith of the men and women of old to believe your word above all else.

God our faith is so shaken today. It's not just shaken by things like the Coronavirus, it's shaken by the evil world around us and the influence it has in the body of Christ, in the church. Would You help us to put it off, to put the world off; to be awake, and alert, and alive to that. To go back to your Word.

Lord, I do pray for the ladies in our church. I pray for the women of God among us, because they do not have an easy task. The world is attacking them with a relentless fury, every day, every day. And you've been so gracious Father to give them words of instruction here. I pray they would see it also as words of hope. They can do this. The women in our congregation can do what this text says because Christ has saved them, bought with His blood, the spirit lives inside of them. They have everything they need to follow what this says. Would you give them the grace to do so Lord?

And would you give their husbands the grace to change as they lead them at home? Lord, would we not have passive men among us? We would we have men that truly lead and teach their wives the Bible and their kids. Help us to change according to this passage, Lord, by your grace and your mercy.

Go with us now into this week as we take these truths to heart and live them out. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.