

3. The Pattern of Partnership 1: Headship & Helpership

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[0 : 00] Well, now if you turn with me to the passage we read in Ephesians 5, that would be a great help. There are three passages in the New Testament that address commands specifically to husbands and wives.

This passage, Colossians 3, verse 18 following, and 1 Peter 3, verses 1 to 7. And each passage begins the same way. Wives, submit to your husbands.

Now I looked up our Church of Scotland book of common order. I've got a number of these books. I looked up the book from 1940 and I looked up the order for marriage. And the passage we read, Ephesians 5, verse 22 onwards, is right at the beginning, in the very heart of the marriage service. Then I looked up the current book, which was printed in 1994. And I looked at the order for marriage. In fact, there are no scripture readings in it. But at the end of the order, there are a list of readings that can be used.

And eventually, in the list after readings from the Apocrypha, I found reference at last to Ephesians chapter 5. But none of the other ones were there. I read that the Joint Liturgical Commission for Great Britain produced in 1999 a marriage service to be used across the denominations.

[1 : 27] And amazingly, it managed to totally omit all of these readings. That is, the only parts of scripture directly addressed to husbands and wives are nowhere to be found in that marriage order.

Well, these facts alone seem to speak, don't they, of the huge seepage into the church of what must be the effects of secular feminism in our culture.

Now, maybe you felt a little bit uncomfortable as we read these words in Ephesians 5. Certainly, when you read these words at weddings, as you look around, you see smiles and sniggers at best, and perhaps even frowns and outrage at worst, that you should dare to read something so wrong as this.

So, should we be embarrassed about readings like that and try and keep them out of our liturgy? Well, whatever we might feel about them, if we want to take God's words seriously, we must take these things seriously.

And there is so much wrong thinking today in all of our thinking about the whole nature of sexuality and gender. And so much of it stems from the fact that we put ourselves always in the centre of the picture, don't we?

[2 : 45] Instead of God. And when we're thinking about relationships and partnerships, we're putting the relationship itself as the goal, as the end in itself. We think about it for what it can give to me and give to us.

Instead of thinking of it as the Bible thinks of it, as a means to an end, the end of serving God and his kingdom. So, this back-to-front thinking is bound to get us into all sorts of confusion, isn't it?

So, we're going to look at this passage tonight, Ephesians 5, 21 to the end of verse 33. And we're going to see what the New Testament teaches us truly about what really is the pattern for partnership within Christian marriage.

And the first thing that I want you to see is that, again, the context of marriage as a partnership that exists to serve the kingdom of God, that that fact is very, very evident here in Ephesians.

That purpose is foundational for the way that Paul teaches us to think about the pattern that godly marriages are to exhibit. I tried to bring out some of that just in our readings.

[3 : 55] Ephesians is a book that is full to brimming with the purpose of God's great salvation. It's got a great future focus, hasn't it? Yes, it speaks of what we've been saved from.

So, chapter 2, verse 1 says, But there's a far greater emphasis in Ephesians on what is yet to be for God's redeemed people.

Just look at chapter 2, verse 6, for example. It begins in verse 4 with the great but God. What has he done? He's raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show or showcase the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Jesus Christ.

That's our future. Look down to verse 10. We are his workmanship, he says, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

See, that's what we're saved for. That's the purpose of God's great salvation. If you look back to chapter 1, you'd see that Paul makes a great play of saying that all of this is God's plan for the fulfillment of all things in Christ Jesus, things in heaven and on earth.

[5 : 14] This was the purpose of God's election, his calling of all his people. Do you see what Paul is saying in this letter? He's saying that the gospel of God's redemption is the recreation of the harmony of God's created order in the heavens and in the earth, in the spiritual realm and in the world of men and women.

It's the reversal of the cosmic disaster of the fall that brought curse onto every single level of the world, every part of all our human relationships.

The gospel of redemption is the reunifying into proper order of the whole of creation. It's the recreation of a perfect world order in Jesus Christ.

The world as God created it to be. The world that he has promised that it shall be through his redemption. A world of harmony where everything and where everyone is in perfect relationship and working together for the goal that God made the whole world for.

The eternal advancement of his glorious kingdom. And that's why all through the letter to the Ephesians there's this great emphasis on oneness. I'm sure you're familiar with that.

[6 : 32] So in chapter 2 Paul talks about the Jew and the Gentile being brought together into one new man in Christ. One new humanity. And that this new humanity is being bound together into the dwelling in which God dwells by his spirit.

And in chapter 3 Paul speaks, doesn't he, about his mission to the Gentiles. And he says in chapter 3 verse 10 that through this, through this united harmony in the church, God's manifold wisdom will be displayed to the heavenly realms.

That is, the whole of the universe, the whole of the spiritual realm will see the glory of God through the oneness of the new humanity that he's created. It's the total reversal of human rivalry and strife. And in Christ that displays to the world the reversal of the sin and rebellion of this world by the gospel. And that's the calling and the purpose of God's people for eternity.

And so therefore, when he comes to chapter 4 verse 1 as we read, he says we are to walk in a manner worthy of that calling. In chapter 5 we're to walk in love.

[7 : 44] We're to walk in light. We're to walk in wisdom. In other words, we are to live as God's people today, now in this world, so as to demonstrate recreation harmony in everything that we are and everything that we do.

Not any longer walking in the ways of this fallen world, the way of darkness as the Gentiles do. What you once were, darkened, hard-hearted, callous, full of strife, full of sensuality.

No. Rather, walking as imitators of God. Walking as children of light. That is, as Paul says in chapter 5 verse 18, we are to be filled with the Spirit.

Now don't misunderstand or mistake. We are filled with the Spirit. Paul said that several times through Ephesians chapter 1 verse 13. When we believe, we were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

Chapter 4 verse 30. We were sealed by the Spirit for the day of redemption. That's why we're not to grieve the Spirit. We're not to go on living as though it weren't true. No, we're to be filled with the Spirit.

[8 : 57] Live as people who are filled with the Spirit. Be what you are. Walk worthily of your calling. But if you look down from chapter 5 verse 18 to see the evidence of walking in the Spirit, according to Paul, you'll see that he doesn't have in mind here some kind of ecstatic experience.

In fact, he's not talking at all about what we feel. He's talking about what we do. How we behave. How we walk in our lives. That's what he's speaking about.

Look at verse 19 literally. It means speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. In other words, encouraging one another with truth, even in our singing. By the way, that means that what we do sing to one another must have some content.

It must mean something, mustn't it? So we can encourage one another with truth. Being filled with the Spirit means singing and giving thanks to God with all our hearts and in our hearts.

So being Spirit-filled means that we will be thankful people, not disgruntled, moaning people. And notice, especially, lastly, being filled with the Spirit means submitting to one another, he says, out of reverence, literally fear for Christ.

[10:15] Now notice that it's this last thing, submitting, that Paul takes up and expounds and explains from verses 22 right the way through to chapter 6, verse 9, right almost to the end of his letter before the conclusion.

It's that aspect of Spirit-filled life that he wants us to concentrate on before he comes to the spiritual struggle with the powers of darkness. Because these verses, these verses about submitting, are all about the very real down-to-earth arena in our day-to-day lives where spiritual battles, the battles raging in the heavenly realms, are actually fought out.

Where the battle rages is actually in the realm of our relationships, the humdrum relationships of our day-to-day life. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, workers. You see, this is where the rubber hits the road. This is where being filled with the Holy Spirit really is seen. This is where walking in the light actually happens.

And this is where our lives are to demonstrate the recreation harmony of God's new world. This is where we're to show all things in heaven and earth that they are united in Christ.

[11:42] This is where we're to show the workmanship that God has created us in advance to be and to do. We all are to submit to God's reordering of our sinful world and to demonstrate that harmony in, well, the domestic relationships of our lives, in marriage, in parenting, in work.

We are to submit to one another, says Paul, out of reverence for Christ. If we are his workmanship, created for the works that he's prepared in advance for us to do, then we are to show our submission to him as our Lord by submitting to his perfect ordering of our relationships in this world. That's how we do it. And first, he turns to our relationships within marriage. So verse 21, if you look at it there, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, that's a hinge verse.

In our ESV Bibles here, a new paragraph begins at verse 22, but it's clear that verse 21 governs each of the three examples that Paul gives us of rightly ordered submission submission that follow husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters.

Now immediately that tells us that the objection made by some people to the command of verse 22 can't stand. Some people want to look at verse 22 and when it says wives submit, they say, ah, but look at verse 21, it says to one another.

[13:18] So this just means mutual submission. Husbands, submit to your wives. Wives, submit to your husbands. Well, it's a good try, but it just doesn't fit the text.

There are three examples here and they're all parallel. There's no sense, is there, that Paul is saying to children that your parents must submit to you. No sense that he's saying to slaves, slaves, you submit to your masters.

No. There is a command to each side, but the command is not exactly the same. The command is appropriate to the one that Paul's speaking to.

Slaves are to obey. Children are to obey. Wives are to submit. What it means is that you're to submit to the one to whom you ought to submit.

In other words, it is God's rightly ordered pattern that decides the way. Both people are involved, a husband and a wife, but not in exactly the same way.

[14:18] That's very, very clear. If you don't need doubt about that, just turn over to Colossians chapter 3 and verse 13, just to deal with this one another business. Just look there at Colossians 3.13.

There's really quite a parallel. Bearing with one another, he says, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other. Now obviously, both don't forgive, do they?

Forgiving each other doesn't mean both forgive. The one who's done the wrong forgives. Forgiving each other doesn't mean each forgiving. It means the one who ought to forgive, forgiving, and the one who ought to receive forgiveness, receiving it.

So what submitting to one another means is spelled out in terms of what that means in each relationship that follows here in Ephesians chapter 5. There is mutuality.

It's not a relationship of dominance, one of the other. It's not a relationship of independence, one of the other. It is a relationship of interdependence, one with the other, in the rightly ordered oneness of God's recreated society through redemption.

[15 : 34] Don't lose sight of that. All of this is set within the context of oneness and harmony for recreated relationships in Christ. Relationships that now serve the purpose that God had planned for them from before the beginning of time to serve his kingdom.

And the commands to husbands and wives are to serve that purpose. The same purpose that Paul has laid out all the way through the letter, that we should be to the praise of his glorious grace now in this world.

So, how then is the pattern of our marriages to witness to and to demonstrate God's recreated harmony of this new world?

How are we to walk worthily of our calling in Christian marriage? How do we walk in the light in our marriages? Well, verses 22 to 33 tell us very clearly by giving commands to wives and to husbands. And by the way, this is explicitly about husbands and wives. It's about marriage. It's not about everyone in general in society. He says, wives are to submit to their own husbands, not to everybody else's husbands too.

[16 : 51] This is not about generally relating to men and women in society. It's about husbands and wives. So, how are we to be? Well, there are two things. Paul speaks to wives and he says, wives, you are to be the helpers that God created you to be and now has redeemed you to be in your marriages.

And then he turns to husbands and he says, husbands, you are to be the heads that God created and now redeemed you to be in your marriages. And that's all there is to it, really.

But we need to make sure that we understand what Paul is saying and what he's not saying. So, let me start with wives. Be the helpers that God created and redeemed you to be, says Paul.

Verse 22, wives, submit to your own husbands. That's the command. It's clear enough. Just in case you miss it, it comes again to round it off in verse 24 and he adds, for good measure, in everything. Wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Now, what Paul means is that that must be the general pattern of a married relationship.

[18 : 04] That the husband is the leader, is the captain of the team, and the wife is a helper, the team player. And that does not mean, of course, that a husband is never to get wisdom or guidance from his wife, never to seek advice from his wife, never to take his wife's account of things.

Of course not. Any leader in any situation who never listens to anybody else is an absolute fool and wouldn't lead anybody anywhere. Of course it doesn't mean that. But it means that the husband is the leader and the wife is the follower.

It doesn't mean either that the husband as the head is always the one with the starring role. That's not always the role for the captain of a team, is it? Last Saturday when we all watched Scotland getting hammered by England at rugby, it was Johnny Wilkinson who was the star of the show. Nobody really realised that the one who was captaining the team, who had his hand on the thing, who controlled the whole game, was a prop forward, Phil Vickery, who was the captain. But he was the one who made the decisions.

He was the one who decided when Johnny Wilkinson kicked all those goals against us. He was the captain. Johnny Wilkinson was a willing follower. And indeed, the captain allowed him to play to his great potential, allowed him to be what he could be, unfortunately.

[19 : 27] And you see, this word submit has at its root the meaning good order. It's submission to a state of right and proper order.

It's something that you subject yourself to. And this state of affairs is God's good ordering for human marriage, as opposed to the chaos and the rivalry of non-submission.

But you see, before any of the wives amongst us raise their hackles and the husbands begin to lick their lips, we need to be absolutely clear here about the rationale for this right ordering that comes. And it comes right in between these two commands, doesn't it, in verse 23. It's absolutely vital that we see this, otherwise we may easily get a wrong idea and a perverse idea.

First the question, why? Why are wives to submit? And the answer, says Paul, is first because this is God's order for creation in order that marriage might serve and glorify God and his kingdom.

[20 : 30] You see, Paul says, for the husband is head of the wife. Now that takes us right back to what we looked at in the last couple of weeks in Genesis and in the very purpose of God creating sexual differentiation in the first place.

Remember, God made man and he made man in order to serve his kingdom. And God put man to work in the garden, to work it and to exercise rule and dominion over God's world.

Adam came first and God spoke to Adam first and God gave Adam his commands first. But then, God said, it's not good for man to be alone, he needs a helper and he created women to be that helper.

Adam was the leader, the captain of the team in living up to his destiny to overrule for God and his world and Eve was the helper.

And equal, yes indeed she was. She was not just like one of the animals. No animal could be found that could be equal to Adam, but no, Eve was a woman in status and in dignity, flesh of my flesh, bone of my bones.

[21 : 38] But, not exactly the same in function. She was complementary to him. And that is God's good ordering for teamwork that will prosper in his kingdom.

That, of course, was in the beginning, but the fall ruined all of that, didn't it? Eve sought to be the leader and Adam allowed himself to be led and he was led into sin and rebellion and the result was the curse of Genesis 3.16 and God says to the woman, your desire will be for your husband, you will want to rule over him and usurp his place.

But no, says God, he will rule over you. He is your head. That's the right order. But there's strife, isn't there? That explains the strife in male-female relationships, in marriage and many other relationships to this day.

Not, very often, harmonious interdependence, but unharmonious rivalry. very often, women not submitting.

Very often, men not leading. But now, says Paul, in God's new society, we are to display the harmonious order once again, the new creation order.

[22 : 50] Wives are not to be rivals of the captaincy of the marriage team, but to be the helpers that they're created to be. And that's how you serve God's kingdom. That's how you help it and not hinder it.

It's God's order of creation, recreated. The second Paul says, submit, because this is God's pattern in redemption. Verse 23, the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church, his body.

You see, to be in Christ is to be caught up in his story and the great drama of redemption itself. And our marriages also are part of that. Our marriages are redeemed for God.

When the New Testament speaks of Christ as being head over all things, it speaks, well, it speaks of his rightful authority, his preeminence. If you look back at chapter 1, verse 22, you'll see that Christ being head over all things means that everything else is under his feet.

He's the absolute ruler. Is that what we're talking about when the husband is head? No. Because if you look also, verse 23, there's a sense in a second way when Christ is head, he's head for his church.

[24 : 10] Yes, he has two the church, but really it should be four. That is, the church as the body of Christ, says Paul, is enabled to enter into the destiny of dominion and rule in the heavenly realms that we were created for through the ministry of Christ, our head.

The whole church finds its destiny because Christ is head for us. That's how we're raised up and seated with him in the heavenly realms, says Paul.

Christ's headship for his church is the source of his rich and abundant blessing for his body. He's the conduit of our destiny. It's how the rich blessings flow from him to us so that the body grows, so that we reach our destiny in Christ.

It's the same image that's there in Ephesians chapter 4. And Paul says it's that same sense of how Christ is head for his church that the husband is to be the head of his wife as a leader leading her into blessing and leading her into fulfillment and into her destiny in serving God.

And so in the light of that, verse 24, as the church submits to Christ gladly and joyfully, wives are to submit to their husbands.

[25 : 34] Now notice, Paul does not say to the husband anywhere, you are to forcefully subjugate your wives. No, he never says that. But wives, he says, voluntarily and gladly, submit yourselves

because that is God's appointed way of blessing for you.

That's why wives are to submit because it's a way of blessing. Second, how are wives to submit? Or Paul says, as to the Lord. You see, submitting to your husband is a privilege. It's for the Lord. It's not for your husband's sake in that sense.

Maybe that's a help to you sometimes, wives. It's not about whether your husband deserves it because very often he won't. It's about whether Christ deserves your submission.

It's a privilege. And it's not in any way to be thought of as a demeaning thing or in any way implying inequality or some sort of less status or dignity.

[26 : 37] It's quite the reverse. It's part of our submission to God. It's a mark of the indwelling spirit of God. Remember in Romans 8 chapter 7 Paul says that the mindset on the flesh is hostile to God.

It does not submit to God's law. But he goes on to say that you are not in the flesh. You're in the spirit. Christ's spirit lives in you. And Christ's spirit is the spirit who values and rejoices in submission to the head.

We don't have time to look tonight to 1 Corinthians 11 but in 1 Corinthians 11 3 Paul says this the head of every man is Christ and the head of the wife is her husband and the head of Christ is God. Well Christ is equal to God. He is God. There's no question in Paul's mind that Christ is inferior to God the Father and yet if you read on in 1 Corinthians the chapter 15 you'll see that the very climax of the whole story of redemption comes when Christ himself puts himself into subjection to his Father.

Jesus Christ will deliver the kingdom he says to the Father and though God has put everything under his feet he will rejoice to submit himself exactly the same language to God the Father.

[28 : 00] You see Jesus Christ is the great example of the one who submits joyfully and gladly because it is the Father's will. he submits himself to God's perfect order in creation and in redemption and it's a privilege for him and says Paul it is a privilege for the wife to submit so to her husband to joyfully and voluntarily and and honorably surrender in order to serve the glory of God's kingdom and that is the high calling of a Christian wife says Paul to submit to your husband but submit for the Lord it's as to the Lord what he's saying is that the greatest and deepest and most dignified fulfillment of your destiny in marriage is to be the helper that God created you to be and has now redeemed you to be within your marriage team that you might be in your marriage as in everything else to the praise of God's glorious grace now I ask you is that demeaning in any way that you should have the calling of emulating the Lord Jesus Christ who himself as the crowning glory of his work in all creation submits himself to the Father as he hands the kingdom to him well that's the word to wives but now after 45 words addressed to wives

Paul has 115 words for husbands that may be significant or not husbands he says be the head that God has created you and redeemed you to be it's all very well to talk about joyful and voluntary surrender to husbands for the wives emulating the church's submission to Christ but you might be saying to yourself right now hang on a second that's all very well but my husband just isn't like Jesus well now's the time to dig him in the ribs and get him to listen Paul doesn't say you can't do that that's part of being a godly wife digging your husband in the ribs and making him listen to God we might think indeed we probably would think that something different was coming next from Paul to husbands I'm sure that the men in Ephesus who sat and listened to this when they heard that bit about the wives they expected Paul's next words to be very different they expected Paul to say something like this husbands make sure your wives stay in submission that's probably what you or I would have written husbands wouldn't it that would be typical of the culture of the day and that would be typical also wouldn't it of some of the macho and the chauvinistic culture that still is around today

I think there's probably plenty men who would be quite happy to read verse 22 and be very happy to do their part to insist on their wives sticking to it very rigidly but let me say men if we think that then we're very very wrong we're so wrong in fact that we would have no idea as to why the feminist movement had to grow up in the first place why it had to be because of just that kind of wrong thinking that kind of thinking is utterly unbiblical utterly un-Christian that is not what this passage is about so we need to listen carefully what is our part as husbands Paul does not say husbands rule your wives he does not say husbands disregard your wives he does not say lord it over your wives he says love your wives that's what Christian headship in marriage means that's a shock because it doesn't really seem to be parallel does it to what Paul says to wives submit to your husbands no love your wives well I guess we might think well we do that

I mean we give them flyers sometimes well now and again give them a cuddle we say nice things to them perhaps we maybe buy them a nice bit of jewellery on an anniversary well at least maybe on the 50th one maybe we think to ourselves well Paul we do do that but no no no says Paul I'm going to have to really explain this to you this is not just a superficial thing he drives home to us in these verses very very clearly very brutally what it really means to love our wives and men just prepare yourselves because this is a shock first of all he gives us the pattern of that headship verse 25 as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that's how you're to love your wives just in case we're not sure what that means Christ giving himself up but back to verse 2 gave himself up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God we have to love our wives says Paul with sacrificial self-giving crucifying love love that costs absolutely everything married love means death of all of your ambition for the sake of your loved one and that is a very great blow to chauvinism in all its forms isn't it listen to how

C.S. Lewis puts this in his book *The Four Loves* this headship then is most fully embodied not in the husband we should all wish to be but in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion whose wife receives most and gives least is most unworthy of him is in her mere nature least lovable the chrism of this terrible coronation is to be seen not in the joys of any man's marriage but in its sorrows the sickness and sufferings of a good wife or in the faults of a bad one in his unwearying never paraded care and his inexhaustible forgiveness you see that's what headship in marriage is really about says Paul loving as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her the team captain is the one who bears all the responsibility when things are going badly isn't that right is that how we are loving our wives men

[34 : 29] I wonder if we really are maybe that's why wives find it very difficult to obey the command to submit C.S. Lewis goes on to say this no feminist should grudge the husband the crown of headship because it isn't a crown of gold it's a crown of thorns and he says very penetratingly the real danger is not that husbands may grasp this crown too eagerly but that they will allow or even compel their wives to usurp it isn't that right so you see we men have to ask ourselves this question who is the real burden bearer in our marriages who bears the cross who suffers the loss when loss must be suffered who gives themselves up for the marriage for the family for the home for all of these things love says Paul as Christ loved his church that's the pattern of headship in marriage but there's more verses 26 to the first part of 28 gives us the purpose of headship

Christ sacrificed himself gave himself that he might bring his body his church into its God ordained destiny to be presented forever to himself to be to be displayed to the whole universe in splendor radiant in holiness forever verse 28 and so he says in the same way husbands are to love our wives as our own bodies Christ the head sacrificed everything for his body for his church in order to bring his church into its glorious destiny and the fulfillment of its purpose so husbands are to love sacrificing everything to bring our wives into their personal destiny of splendor forever and ever that's what it means to be head of your wife says Paul that's the purpose not for your self fulfillment it's for the full flowering of our wives in holiness and in grace and in glory in Christ so is that on our minds husbands day by day as we live our lives with our wives well I have to confess

I don't think that is the first thing on my mind when I get up on a Monday morning but that's our whole purpose in being husbands says Paul to bring our wives into their glorious destiny in Christ then thirdly he goes on to add a very real persuasion if you look at verse 28 the last part of it to 32 he tells us as husbands that we also can only attain our true destiny by loving our wives that way by loving our wives with that pattern of crucifixion and for that purpose of glory he who loves his wife says Paul loves himself no one hates his own flesh he says he looks after it he cherishes it nourishes it so that it can grow and develop but you see marriage says Paul has made the two of you into one flesh and therefore you can't grow your spiritual destiny can't be reached without your wife growing and her spiritual destiny being reached because you're one so she can't grow unless you are the head unless you're the head that Christ wants you to be unless you're leading her into her destiny you're not going anywhere either there's something very profound about this that's what he says in verse 32 it's a mystery not in the sense of being incomprehensible but rather that it's a wonderful and glorious thing that's made known to us mystery is always that in Paul it's something that was once hidden is now made known and the wonder is that our marriages in their one flesh union reflect the union of

Christ with his church and therefore we can only grow individually if we grow together that's the whole point of Ephesians 4 do you remember we looked at it just a few weeks ago we grow up into

him who is the head even Christ from him the head the whole body grows but as each part does its work so it is in marriage we grow into our destiny in Christ only when each partner properly harmoniously does its work wives helping yes but husbands leading with love sacrificial love cross like love in order that our wives may reach their full flowering their glory their fulfillment in Christ and therefore we also as husbands can make the same progress but not otherwise so he who loves his wife loves himself and there's no other way to love yourself if you're a husband than by loving your wife that's Paul's meaning and if you don't you don't just damage her you damage yourself too it's what it means to be one flesh if one hurts so does the other but if one is blessed so is the other how do you see what a wonderful pattern what a beautiful pattern of harmony and partnership that really is there's not a sniff of male chauvinism about this it's the very opposite any man who stresses the idea of authority or lordship or thinks in terms of subjugation of his wife is miles and miles away from this biblical pattern any woman who would deny this true pattern of Christ like headship in terms of being led into their destiny and radiance in Christ well they too are miles away from the desire of Christ for you but where a Christian couple lives in a marriage like this not only is it their greatest blessing not only is it calling them into their personal destiny in Christ it manifests to the world the glory of Christ and his kingdom it does it in so many ways doesn't it blesses them and their family and leads them in harmony in Christ but it spills over it blesses others too something of the glory and the beauty of the pattern of Christ's redeeming love was bound to shine out shines out to the world it shines to the whole of earth and heaven says Paul it will be marriage to the praise of his glorious grace marriage that showcases the purpose of God for all eternity it will be marriage that preaches the gospel how desperately our world needs that today it's just like the world of Ephesus isn't it people are darkened in their understanding alienated from the life of God because of ignorance hard-hearted callous given up to sensuality that's such a description of our human relationships in our fractured society marriage is too but marriage like this it shines a light into that darkness it shows what real love is it shows what real commitment is it shows what real sacrifice is and just by being this way our marriages shine the light of the gospel of [42 : 04] Christ to the world round about us it shows God's new redeemed recreated society to the world look at verse 33 at the very end yes it sums it up but there's more there too isn't there you see let each one of you husbands love like this wives respect submit like this it's not just in general you see he's very specific each one of us every one of us in our marriages not just some of us not just those who have what seem to be naturally easy marriages if there is such a thing I'm not sure no each one of us says Paul just as in chapter 4 when he's talking to the church each one of us needs to play our part it's not just how we're to think about marriage says Paul it's how we're to do it and be it now that might sound tough and let me tell you it is tough it's very tough because we're we're fallen sinful creatures and getting married doesn't expunge our sin just exposes our sin an awful lot more to somebody who's very close to us it is tough but remember what Paul says in

Ephesians 4 7 when he's speaking to the church grace is given to each one of us he commands us to walk worthily of our calling but when God commands us he gives us grace to obey his commands God's commands are his enablings we must obey his commands but because he commands it we can obey his commands by his spirit living within us so Paul says let each one of us walk worthily in our marriages wives be the helper that God made you and redeemed you to be it will be hard it will be very hard at times part of it may be you having to help your husband to take a lead and that can be very hard very frustrating but you're not doing it for your husband you're doing it for the Lord and he gives grace he does but husbands we are to be the head we are to be the loving leaders into glory of our wives that God has made us to be and redeemed us to be there are more words written to us because the prime responsibility is with us and that means where there are wrong things and damaging patterns in marriage we are the final buck that it stops with and sometimes the problem is that we have strong vestiges of a chauvinism we arrogate authority to ourselves that is wrong and that's just a dreadful parody of this headship it's just sheer boorishness unbiblical we find it even in evangelical churches we must not have this we must repent of that there's no sniff of that in this teaching but I suspect more often that our problem as men is not that chauvinism but is probably a wimpish abdication of our responsibility as C.S. Lewis said dodging the crown of thorns giving it to our wives so easy to retreat isn't it as men into our comfortable world of work or the golf club or the computer or the newspapers or whatever it is so easy for us to leave the yoke of the real responsibilities in our homes and our families upon our wives and get on with just loving ourselves isn't that right?

might be just me but I suspect it's not well you see we as men need these words of Paul don't we let each one of you love his wife as himself each one of us in fact that's the only way to love yourself says Paul with love that is Christ like that leads to true glory so men let me ask you tonight those of you who are married and I include myself are you loving your wives?

I worked in London every Monday morning I used to spend some time with Dick Lucas and as he was leaving my room he always asked me the same question are you loving your wife? I got quite irritated with him but he knew that he needed to ask me that question so let's ask that question to one another men regularly are we loving our wives as Christ loved his church?

so then says Paul let each one of you love his wife as himself and let each wife see that she respects her husband and that will be marriage that is to the praise of his glorious grace that will be marriage that will preach the gospel to the world around that will be marriage that showcases God's new recreated society through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus that's the pattern for married life that serves the kingdom of God well we're going to sing to close and it's a hymn about marriage