

A Love He Can Feel Titus 2:4

Intro. What a great day to be a dad! Amen? On Mother's Day, I addressed the men. I felt the gift the wives and mothers of our congregation might appreciate most is husbands and men who show them the respect they're worthy of. The premise of the message went like this... *The primary and most basic way we learn to respect and honor women is by observing the way our father treats our mother.* The text for our message was **I Pet. 3:7 - Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.** We drew 6 points from this verse and I feel like they're worth repeating.

1. A Christian man will be considerate of his wife's needs
2. A Christian man will share his life with his mate
3. A Christian man will live with his wife in a manner that shows her respect
4. A Christian man will recognize his wife's weaknesses and will seek to protect and support her
5. A Christian man will treat his wife as a fully participating partner.

And all the ladies say, "Amen!" So guys, how's it going? The instruction in **I Pet. 3:7** isn't a set of nice suggestions, it's the command of God. It's not optional. Written at a time when women had little value and were treated like slaves and property, the Lord presents a radical word that reflects His will for men who know and love Him. To fortify these commands, the Lord reminds us that our relationship to Him will rise and fall by the way we treat the wife and mothers He gave us.

But today is Father's Day. Since "*turn about is fair play,*" I want to address the ladies this AM. When I told Peggy what I planned to do she said, "*You must not be afraid of death!*" But just as we found a passage of Scripture for men on Mother's Day, there's a passage for women that deserves our attention on Father's Day, We'll get to it in a moment. There's also a principle worth remembering. It goes like this... *The primary and most basic way we learn to love our father is by observing the way our mother meets his needs and is lovingly devoted to him.*

How often does a builder refer to the blueprints of the house he's constructing? The answer would have to be 'continuously'! There's no way he could give those plans a quick once over and remember all the details. There's no way he could simply glance at the prints and then proceed to build it as designed. In the same way, we must often refer to God's blueprints for life and marriage. **Jas. 1:25** puts it this way...**the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.** Notice we're to look into God's Word intently and continuously. The trouble is...we don't always do this. We imagine we can become a godly husband or wife simply because we're saved. We sometimes treat God's Word like we've heard it all before. But there's nothing automatic about becoming the men and women God has called us to be. We have to look and keep looking into His blueprint...His perfect law...and then be careful to obey. So let's begin to think about a godly wife by going back to creation and the basic need of every man.

1. A man's most basic need – Gen. 2:18-25

vs. 18-20 - The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

After surveying everything He created, the Lord pronounced his creations **very good. (1:31)** But notice the one exception in **v.18**. Adam's *aleness* was **not good**. It wasn't good at all. For Adam to live alone and unaccompanied was not a good situation. He quickly developed bad habits. He doesn't put the toilet seat down or put the cap back on the toothpaste. (but living alone, why should he?) / He leaves pizza crusts lying around. / His clothing looks like it was slept in and he regularly belches after eating. Have you ever visited a guy's dorm at a university? But seriously, God saw that it wasn't good for him to do life without a companion / helper / and someone he could share his life with. After naming all the animals, **v. 20** says, **But for Adam no suitable helper was found**. So the Lord responded to Adam's need.

vs. 21-25 - So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

What an incredible moment! Does God love to surprise His children? Can God keep a secret? I'd say 'yes' on both counts. In fact the surprises God has in store for those who trust him defy imagination. While Adam was fast asleep, God took one of his ribs and made a woman. The Bible says Eve was made **for Adam** and **from Adam**. It also says Eve was brought **to Adam** and named **by Adam**. There was a wonderful equality about them. They were comparable but unique. Both were made by God and both were made in God's image and likeness. They were made to compliment and fulfill each other, not to compete with each other!

Notice Adam's response when he first saw Eve. **This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh**. Words written on a page can't do justice to the explosion of approval that erupted from Adam when he first laid eyes on this gorgeous woman. As Adam gazed on Eve for the first time, the feeling that welled up in him must have been like, "*eechy-wow-wow...this is more like it!*" This may have been the first incident of male stuttering. Eve was like him but so unlike him. She was perfectly suited to be his companion and to resolve his loneliness. She was made from his own side to remind him of the oneness and intimacy of the relation they were created to enjoy.

So ladies, we've consulted the blueprint...we've read the schematic. What are the take-aways from this ancient record? **First**, your husband doesn't do well alone. Without you, he has a void...a hole in his heart. He's a puzzle missing a piece. He is deficient in areas where you are efficient and proficient. He was created with a built-in need for companionship. **Second**, God made you and brought you to him specially designed to resolve his problem and deepest needs. God made you to be his helper...not in the sense of being his slave / underling / or even co-worker. The idea of the Hebrew word translated **help-meet / helper / or suitable helper** has the idea of one who rescues another. God made you to be his rescuer / his completer / his satisfier / ...the one who fulfills every dimension of his life as a man. And here's a secret...your man is a disaster without you. Amen? Yes, God can help the single man and God will meet the needs of a single man or widower when his wife is no longer in the picture...but your role from creation is to be the one who completes him. You are the missing piece in his life.

Men, God has given you a partner, a soul-mate, a best friend. In this lovely lady, God's intention was to provide you with all you need for life-long fulfillment.

But if we neglect or forget the blueprint, here's what often happens...the original purpose of marriage is forgotten. We forget that God created marriage for companionship...for togetherness. It may not happen intentionally, but couples often begin to drift apart. Though married, they develop separate lives, interests and goals. Instead of we and us, the focus can shift to me and mine. They begin to engage in their own pursuits and develop their own schedules, they become like ships passing in the night. In that scenario a husband's deepest needs may go unmet. Temptations God never intended for him to endure begin to emerge. But a whole new chapter of your marriage and new dimensions of your relationship can open up when you realize once again that God designed your husband for you and you for him, and that He created marriage primarily for companionship. It's right here in His blueprint.

Jane Sordyl has walked with the Lord for many years and has been married to Joe for 43 years. During those years God has taught her many things about how to love her husband in the way that honors God. At this time she has a testimony to share with us.

2. An obedience that honors God – Eph. 5:22-31

In the pagan Greco-Roman world of the first century, the Christian marriage and family was a radical thing. Wives were treated poorly and were useful only for housework, child-bearing and child-rearing. Young women saved out of paganism were confronted with a new set of priorities and privileges and women with unsaved husbands needed special encouragement. Once again, the instructions God gave through His apostles were not suggestions to be tried, but commands to be obeyed. Though times have changed, God's Word remains the same. Those who call themselves followers of Christ are responsible to surrender themselves to obey these commands.

Let's turn to **Eph. 5**. Listen as I read **vs. 22-31 - Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.**

The Scripture emphasizes the wife's responsibility to submit to and respect her husband's leadership. The husband's main responsibility is to love his wife. We find this same emphasis in **Col. 3**. These twin commands lie at the heart of the series I highly recommend entitled, Love and Respect. In **Eph. 5**, a husband's love for his wife is compared to the love of Christ who gave Himself for His Bride, the Church. A wife's submission to her husband is compared to the way the church must submit to Christ who occupies the ultimate position of authority over our lives. The love a husband must have for his wife is the Greek word *agape* which refers to an active selfless and sacrificial concern for the good of the one loved. *Agape* never refers to emotional / romantic / or sexual love. The Greek language has other words to describe these aspects of love. *Agape* love in the ultimate sense is the love demonstrated at Calvary when Jesus died in our place. It's the kind of love captured by song writer Clint Black who sings, "*Love isn't something that we find, it's something that we do.*" This kind of love is an action and not just a feeling that comes over us.

It isn't a feeling we have or don't have...it's an attitude and action the Lord commands us to practice.

I'm sure you realize feelings can't be commanded. No one can command you to be excited about Brussell Sprouts or Ohio State football if you're not a fan. No one can command you to smile and be happy when the diagnosis is bad and your world just collapsed. So the primary responsibility of a husband is to love his wife...to act in loving ways. The primary responsibility of a wife is to support her husband's loving leadership. When agape love is practiced by those concerned to obey God, it sometimes proceeds from a sense of duty or obligation that can be divorced from feelings. Some people are hard to love, but love them we must.

But I think you'll agree that it's somewhat less than satisfying when someone gives you a gift because they had to. It doesn't feel like love when a person, for whatever reason, is forced to love you and do you good. It's like the kid who showed up at the birthday party and said, "*I got you this gift for you but I didn't want to and it cost more than I wanted to spend...but here it is.*" Yet this self-sacrificing love of God is something required of us. It's part of our brand as Christians. We are disobedient if we refuse to practice selfless and sacrificial concern for the good of others...even our enemies.

When we come to **Titus 2**, we find that wives are commanded not only to submit to their husbands but to love them. This refutes the idea that all a wife has to do is to show her husband a little respect. But here in **Titus 2**, a different Greek word is translated **love**. The love she's commanded to show her husband is a love that runs deeper than charity / benevolence / theory / and self-sacrificing action... this kind of love is a love he can feel.

3. A love he can feel - Titus 2:1-5

The command I want you to see is tucked away in **v. 4** but we need to read **vs. 1-5** to see it in its context. **You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.**

In **v. 4**, the Greek word is *philandros*. This kind of love involves a contented commitment that transcends feelings. It's a love expressed in devotion. It means a wife is to be totally devoted to her man. It means he is the object of her affections and her very best friend. Now that's something higher than the duty of performing loving actions, isn't it? Agape love is a verb...an active response that can be commanded of us. But *philandros* is a kind of love that must be learned / developed / and practiced over time.

And notice...Paul explained the plan for how this love is to be learned. It's to be learned from the example of older, more mature Christian women. It's learned by observation. It's better caught than taught. Sometimes the older folk in the church are made to feel all they can do is pray. That idea doesn't come from the Bible! The older Christians are to be walking, talking models of the faith. An older woman who respects and admires her husband who now shuffles along with a cane...is a beautiful example of God's original design in action. The older wife who builds her husband up instead of running him down, demonstrates her rock-solid devotion. The older wife who surprises her husband with tender affection and exhibits a deepening friendship, sets a pattern for younger women. Isn't it heart-warming to see an older couple holding hands and still very much in love? Time and time again at MBC, we've seen this tireless devotion play out as one mate cares for the other and their children care for their aged parents. That line might not have been in my message 10 yrs. ago, but...

This devotion is Adam and Eve all over again. It's God's plan for companionship playing out. According to God's plan, the older wife becomes a mentor and the younger women become her disciples. Can you sense what Paul has done? He presents the church as a training center where each member is responsible to edify or build up the others. And by their example, older married couples are uniquely qualified to teach young husbands and young wives.

The idea that emerges from **Titus 2:4** is that God's design for a wife and her husband is that out of her devotion to him, she becomes his best friend and lover. The emotional and relational super glue unique to marriage is the sexual dimension of the marital relationship. A wife must learn to love her husband...not in theory or as a vow they once recited...but with a love he can feel everyday. That's *philandros* love and the challenge of the morning. Ladies...love your man in a way he can feel. Tell him how much it means to you when you have time together. Find ways to demonstrate your devotion to him. Surprise him on days other than Hallmark holidays. The first time I went to Russia, Peggy wrote me a note to open each day. (Since that first trip, I've sort of been on my own...but her thoughts that first time were so sweet.) Do all you can to build and strengthen your friendship. God created you to as a gift to your husband...a helper... completer...a satisfier. Your devoted love is the best Father's Day gift he could ever receive and it's exactly the example your children need.

Only those who know God through faith in Christ can live and love in the way Christ has commanded us to. His love is poured into our hearts when we trust Him. He gives us new desires and a new power to do His will. I urge you to trust Christ and be saved today.