



MEN AND MARRIAGE

Part 3 of Real Marriage

Pastor Mark Driscoll | January 29, 2012

“WHERE ARE YOU?”

All right, men. Men! You know who you are. When a company struggles or fails, who ultimately has to take responsibility? The CEO. When a nation struggles or fails, who ultimately has to take responsibility? The president, the king, whoever is in charge. How about a sports team, a sports team struggling or failing? Another way of saying that is a Seattle sports team exists. Who takes responsibility for that? Well, ultimately, it's going to be the coach and/or the general manager. Let's say there's a military unit, heads out to war, and struggles and/or fails. Who ultimately takes responsibility? Well, it's going to be the highest-ranking officer. Why, why is that? Because they're the head. Others under their authority may bear some responsibility, but because they're in the highest authority, they bear the most responsibility.

So, let me ask you men a question. When our first father and his wife, our first mother, were in the Garden of Eden, who sinned first, Eve or Adam? Eve did. Eve partook, and he observed. And then God comes in Genesis 3, and who does he call out for? Adam. He calls out to Adam, “Where are you?”

Why does he do that? Is it that he did not hold her responsible for her sin? No, we read in Genesis 3 that God came to her, spoke to her about her sin, that there are consequences for women today because of the sin of our first mother, Eve. But God held the man primarily responsible, because he's the head of his family.

That's why we read in Romans 5:12–21 that because of the man's sin, the whole race fell. Women are responsible for their sin. Wives are responsible for their sin, but their husbands, in addition, also bear responsibility. What does this mean for your family? What does this mean for my family? It means that the well-being of our wife is our responsibility.

It says it this way in 1 Corinthians 11. Paul says that the woman is the glory of the man. That means that she is the reflection of his affection, that if she is flourishing, it should be because of his loving investment and involvement. How's it going?

You men need to know that we will stand before God. You husbands, in particular, need to know that we will stand before God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the one who knows and sees all, and we're going to give an account for ourselves, as men. And if we're privileged to be husbands, we will also give an account for our wife. And if we're given the great blessing of children, we will also give an account for our children. They will give an account, as well, but we will give an account for everyone that is under our authority.

This is what it means when the Bible uses the language of “head,” that we are responsible, in the sight of God, for the well-being of our wives and children. And so, men, in this sermon on men and marriage, you need to know that if your wife struggles or fails to grow in godliness, if your children struggle or fail to grow in godliness, it is your responsibility in the sight of God; in addition to their responsibility, but it is your responsibility, as well, and that's what the Bible means when it uses the word “head,” and it does so in many places.

EPHESIANS 5

I'll give you one, and we'll read it at great length, Ephesians 5:22–33, the one section of Scripture that if in our day it's actually read at a wedding, some sneer, others snicker, and if you believe the Bible, you praise God for it. Ephesians 5:22–33, we'll just read it.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the—” what? “head of the wife even as Christ is the—” what? “head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word—” there's the Scriptures, “so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any other such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.” After all, they are one.

“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. Therefore,” he quotes Genesis 2, “‘a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife—’” that is marriage, “‘and the two shall become one flesh.’” That is consummation of their covenant. “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

There are some instructions here for wives, and we will deal with those in the next sermon. For this sermon, I want to look at the exhortations, admonitions that God has, through Paul, for men. And most of his exhortation here is for men, because, as head, we bear primary responsibility.

MARRIAGE IS A COVENANT

And what he is saying, first of all, is that marriage is to be covenantal. This is in the biblical context of covenant, and this is very important for men to understand because how many of you men are involved in business? And in business, you have contracts. Men enter into contracts. If you sign up for a credit card, that's a contract. You buy a home or a car, that's a contract. What works for business does not work for marriage. Marriage is not to be contractual.

Perhaps the most grotesque example of contractual marriage is the prenuptial agreement, which is, "Let us make sure that we have organized our divorce before our wedding. Let's make sure that the terms of dissolution are absolutely agreed upon before we even have our union."

The Bible, when it comes to marriage, does not present it in a way that is contractual, but covenantal. Hundreds of times, the Bible speaks of covenant. It's not a stretch to say that the Bible is, in large part, all about covenants.

In the simplest understanding of a covenant, it's an agreement between two people. Sometimes that can be between two human beings, or between a person (or a group of people) and God. Salvation is called the new covenant. God enters into a covenant with us, and God's covenant with us is that, "I will be your God, and you will be my people, and I'll never leave you nor forsake you." That's covenantal language. Similarly, a husband is to look at his wife and say, "I will be your husband, and you will be my wife, and we will make a people, and I will never leave you nor forsake you." That's covenantal language. That's not contractual language.

On at least two occasions, the Bible explicitly speaks of marriage as a covenant. It does so in Proverbs 2:17 and in Malachi 2:14. It says it explicitly, and then it infers it repeatedly throughout the course of the Bible. And there's one particular word in the Bible that explains covenant, and in the Old Testament, it's this little word *hesed*. It's a Hebrew word, and it's a very important, significant word.

I'll give you some of the ways it is translated in various translations of the Bible. Sometimes it is called covenant love, loving-kindness, mercy, steadfast love, loyal devotion, loyal love, commitment, loyalty, or reliability. I love how *The Jesus Storybook Bible* says it. It's a great kids' Bible, and it uses this language for *hesed* to thread the themes of the stories of the Bible together, and it calls covenant love "a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love." I read that to my kids, and I kiss them, and I say, "God loves you like that, and I love you like that." Never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

The first thing I need you men to understand is that you are the covenant head. And before we get into headship, I want to unpack covenant. And what this means is that your understanding of marriage has to be covenantal, not contractual. And if I had to break it down in its simplest form, I would articulate it this way. Contract is about me negotiating terms that benefit me. It's selfish. Covenant is about me giving myself to you for your well-being. It's servanthood. Covenant is about your benefit; contract is about my benefit.

When you hear people say things like, "Well, I think we should get a divorce, I want to start over, you know, God wants me to be happy," they're thinking contractually, not covenantally, because what they're saying is "me." That's all they're saying. "God wants me to be happy. God wants me to get what I want. God wants me to get what I need." Covenantal thinking says, "God wants me to become what you need. God wants me to love you, as you need. God wants me to serve you, as you need. God wants me to invest in you, as you need." Covenant is about what is best for you; contract is about what is best for me. It's the difference between selfishness and servanthood.

In a covenantal marriage, a husband and a wife are in covenant with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and they are to be in covenant with one another. And the Bible says that as Jesus loves and serves the church, so the man, as the covenant head, is to similarly, lovingly lead his wife, so that she flourishes and grows in the grace of God.

EVERY COVENANT HAS A HEAD

So, number one, it's about covenant; and, number two, every covenant has a head, and the head is the one who is ultimately the senior leader, the high authority, the one who is responsible for the oversight, the management, and the well-being of the covenant. So, in our new covenant relationship with God, through Christ, Jesus Christ is our covenant head. He is the Head. When we are part of the church of Jesus Christ, the head of the church is Christ. That's exactly what we read in Ephesians 5. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church."

And so what this does not mean—men, as head of household or head of family, we're not the boss. We're the head. We're not to be a boss like a boss at work, just sort of delegating duties to our wife and to our children. Instead, we are to be the head like Jesus, and that in every way the relationship between Jesus and the church is to be for us a pattern of covenant relationship.

Now, it sounds peculiar, because Jesus never went on a date, and he never got married. And the question is what does he possibly know about marriage? But in the storyline of the Bible, marriage is a bit of a reflection of the relationship that Jesus has with the church. And some of you men may say, "I've got a very difficult wife." Not nearly as difficult as Jesus' wife. Right? Some of you would say, "But my wife, she's very undependable and unthankful." Oh, not like Jesus' wife. Jesus' wife, she's a piece of work. Amen?

The church of Jesus Christ is not always this beautiful, radiant, glorious bride. She falls into sin, folly, rebellion, selfishness, but Jesus loves his bride,

the church. And we read some things about how Jesus loves his bride, the church, and how men are to love their bride, their wife. We read words in Ephesians 5 like “love” and “washing with the word of God,” “making her holy,” “nourishing her,” “cherishing her,” “becoming one with her.” That’s all covenantal language.

And so even in the covenant of marriage, Jesus Christ is the capital-*H* Head. The Head of your marriage is Jesus, and the lowercase-*h* head is the husband, and the husband is to be part of the church, and learning about Jesus, and seeing how Jesus loves and serves and sanctifies the church. And then he’s supposed to take those examples from Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, be something like Jesus to his wife, so that she’s cherished, and she’s nurtured, and she’s loved, and she’s pursued, and she’s forgiven, so that she grows in godliness and grace and gloriousness, that the woman is the glory of the man, that she reflects his investment. As a church matures and grows, it reflects the service and the sacrifice of Jesus. So it is with the woman. As she grows, and flourishes, and as her children grow and flourish, it shows the service and sacrifice of her husband and her Lord.

Here’s the bottom line, guys. Your wife is your garden. And if you don’t like the way the garden looks, you’re the gardener. You can’t just stand back and yell at her, or give demands to her, or pass judgments regarding her. You need to love her like Christ loved the church. You need to take responsibility like Jesus took responsibility. You need to pursue her. You need to invest in her. You need to care for her. You need to cherish her and nourish her with the grace that God gives you.

Now, what this doesn’t mean—Ephesians 5, and Colossians 3, and 1 Peter 3, and 1 Corinthians 11; the Bible says this many, many, many times—what it doesn’t mean when it says that the husband is the head of the wife, it doesn’t mean that men are over women. God forbid that would happen. I have two daughters. The scariest thing I can think of is that men, in general, were in authority over them. This does not mean that men are over women. This means one man, one woman, husband and wife in the covenant of marriage, that the man is the head. He takes responsibility and burden before God to lovingly, humbly lead her, and that he, by the grace of God, seeks continually to reveal Jesus to her in his words and his deeds. That’s what it means. And this is to protect women from other relationships.

Let’s say, for example, there’s a daughter, and she’s got a close relationship with her covenant head Christian dad. That headship protects her from other boys who want to come along and be her head, tell her what to do, set an identity for her, abuse her, endanger her. It protects her from other young men who would come to take that place of headship in her life.

Similarly with a wife. If the husband loves her, like Christ loves the church, and he takes responsibility for her, that protects her from bad men, bosses, men who have ill intent or those who are perverted. It protects her. It puts her in the context where she is lovingly cared for and protected. And in our day, when one in three women is sexually abused, and women are mistreated, and maligned, and taken advantage of, it’s good to know that God’s intent is that men would be the head, and that husbands and fathers would be the head of their household, and that they would lovingly lead and protect their children, to be sure, but in light of this sermon, especially their wife.

THE HUSBAND IS THE HEAD OF THE WIFE

Now, what it also doesn’t say is that maybe, perhaps, if you think it’s culturally appropriate, after you’ve gone to college, and read a few books, and been raised on feminism, and women’s magazines, and sitcoms that make fun of men, if after all of that, you think it’s a good idea, because you and your friends voted, then perhaps, maybe, perchance, the man could theoretically be the head of the household. That’s not what it says. It says that the husband *is* the head of the wife, as Christ, what? *Is* the head of the church. What we’re not going to do today is take a vote and say, “How many of you think Jesus should be in charge of our church?” We’re not voting. He is the head of the church. Men, you are the head of your home. The husband is the head of the wife.

We get into a lot of trouble when God says we are something, and then we debate as to whether or not we should be. We waste a lot of unnecessary time and energy. You men are the head of your home. You are the head of your wife, as Christ is the head of the church. It’s not a “not.” It’s an “is.” So, the question is not, “Is the man the leader? Is the man the head? Is the man responsible?” The question is, “Is he doing a good or a bad job?” That’s the only question.

So, my question to you, men, would be, “How’s it going? How are you doing? How are your children? How is your wife?” And I’m not just talking about financial provision, though that is part of it; but I’m talking about emotional provision, and spiritual provision, and mental provision, that you are giving yourself so that they might be nourished and that they might flourish. How’s it going?

And we waste so much time and energy in our day, churches debating, arguing, Christians debating, arguing. “Well, should the man be the head of the wife?” He what? He what? He is! He is!

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

And so we will continually at Mars Hill Church hold you men to a high standard. And when your wife is not flourishing, or your children are not flourishing, we will ask the same question that God asked our first father, “Where are you? Where are you?” And what we will want you to do is take responsibility.

The essence of masculinity is the taking of responsibility. It doesn’t matter how much beer you can drink, or how much meat you can eat, or how loud you can belch. That does not make you a man. A monkey can do that. A gorilla can do it even better than you. That doesn’t make you a man. We live in a day where masculinity is defined by some sort of ridiculous machismo. Ultimately, masculinity is about taking responsibility. You may not be big. You may not be tough. You may not be able to win a thumb-wrestling match, let alone a cage fight. But if you take responsibility, you are a good head,

and you are a masculine man.

I need you men to hear that, because there are guys right now who drive trucks, shoot guns, and beat women. That's not a man. There are other men who drive hybrids. God bless you. We'll pray for you. These men don't shoot guns, but they love their wives, and they love their children, and they take responsibility, and as a result, people under their leadership are blessed, flourish, and see Jesus Christ in them. Those are men. Those are men.

And this is what Jesus did for us, okay? Here's what Jesus does for the church. This is, this is the gospel. This is the good news. This is amazing! God comes to the earth, as the man Jesus Christ. God becomes a man, and he lives a life without any sin, no sin! And he goes to the cross, and he dies! Why? Why did he die? The Bible says it this way, over, and over, and over, and over: "for our sins." See, the wage for sin is death. We all should die. Instead, it's Jesus who suffers death.

What does this mean? Jesus took that which was not his fault, and he made it his responsibility. That's why Jesus— he's the God-man, he's the perfect man. Is it my fault that I sin, or is it Jesus' fault that I sin? It's my fault. I can't look at Jesus and say, "Well, look what you made me do." And Jesus goes to the cross, and he substitutes himself in my place for my sins. And what he's doing, he's taking responsibility for me. So, it's my fault, but his responsibility. That's what Jesus does for the church, and so that's what husbands are supposed to do for their wives. That's what fathers are supposed to do for their children, not in a saving way, but in a serving way.

FOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

So, men, let me tell you what your responsibilities are, and these apply, as well, to the ladies. I'll give you four responsibilities. Number one, your first responsibility is Christian: repent of sin; trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection; read your Bible; grow in grace; pray; be involved with God's people in the church. Christian. First things first, your covenant relationship with God. If you're here today trying to fix your marriage, and you don't know Jesus, that is not your first priority. Your first priority is to get in relationship with Jesus, and out of that relationship with him, he will change you so that you can be a better spouse.

Your second responsibility is to your spouse. That means husbands, your wife; wives, your husband. Your next priority, your next responsibility, your spouse.

And then third, parent. If God should bless you with children, loving them, serving them, raising them, investing in them, and growing them. And let me say this. If you invert these, you will destroy your children and your marriage. For some people, their children are their god, meaning their highest priority. For some, their spouse is their God, meaning their highest priority.

And number four, your fourth responsibility is worker. This can be your work outside of the home, vocationally. You go to work and pay your bills. This can be your work at home. Maybe you're a stay-at-home mom, and your work is to love your family and be homeward in your orientation.

Whatever your responsibilities are, these must be the order of your responsibilities. And what happens is, if at any point you have an inversion, then you're not being responsible. So, men, as the covenant head, it is your responsibility before God to ensure that your life reflects these priorities, that your wife's life reflects these priorities, that your children's life reflects these priorities, which means worker is not the most important thing in a man's world. It tends to be where a man goes for his identity. He should go to his first relationship for his identity. "I'm made by God. I'm loved by God. I'm given dignity, value, and worth by God. I'm redeemed by God. I'm a son of God. That's my identity, not my employment. My Creator, he determines who I am."

And what I see continually with men, they will say, "I do take responsibility," but they may take responsibility for their job. They may take responsibility for their children, but they may have their responsibilities out of order, to where covenant relationship with Jesus and covenant relationship with their wife are not, practically speaking, by looking at their schedule, their emotional energy, their output and investment, the highest priorities in their life.

If you're that man, and you're in sin, and you have not taken responsibility for the well-being of your wife, you've not taken responsibility for the well-being of your children, because you have an inversion in your priorities, I want you, right now, to hold your wife's hand as an act of repentance, telling her you're hearing this sermon, and you're sorry, and you promise to follow up and talk to her about this.

What happens then is men who shirk their responsibilities, they push them off on other men. "Oh, my wife's hurting. I'll go find a good women's ministry for her." What about you? Where are you? Your children aren't doing well. "Well, we'd better hire a good youth pastor. He'd better fix it." Where are you? "Oh, my kids, well, we'll just find a good school, and they'll fix them." Where are you? "Well, that's okay. The police will come pick them up, put them in jail." Where are you? Because that's where it goes.

We've even got a world now where 40 percent of kids in our nation go to bed without a dad. In certain ethnic communities, it's 70 percent, 80 percent, 90 percent. Push the responsibilities off to the women and to the children, to the schools, to the state. "Somebody else should feed my kids breakfast. Somebody else should educate my kids. Somebody else should lead my kids to Christ. Somebody else should comfort my wife. Somebody else should disciple my wife."

Let me say this. There's nothing wrong with programs, particularly in the church, for children and women, but those should be primarily for those who do not yet have a Christian husband or father, and it should be supplemental for those who do! Ephesians 6, "Fathers, train your children in the admonition of the Lord." In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul says if any women have a Bible question, where should they go? Go ask your husband, and he should know, but if he doesn't know, he should go find out, and he should take it upon himself to say, "It's my responsibility to be the pastor of this

little flock called home and family.”

Men, I tell you this not as a duty, but as a delight. You want your kids to come to you. You want your wife to come to you. If they need prayer, if they need help, if they need encouragement, if they’ve sinned, if they’ve been sinned against, you should always be telling them, “I love you like Christ loves me, and he sent me here, and I’m here for you with the love of Christ.”

And you young men, you single men, there is a culture that causes you not to think covenantally or to prepare covenantally. There’s a culture that wants you to extend your adolescence as long as possible, to take advantage of women, to be into pornography and not marriage, to be a guy who wants to just abdicate his responsibilities, oftentimes pushing them off to his mother. “Hey, Mom, can I borrow money? Hey, Mom, can I move back in the house? Hey, Mom, could I drive your car?” When you’re sixteen, it’s cute. When you’re twenty-six, it’s annoying. When you’re thirty-six, it’s humiliating. When you’re forty-six, you should punch yourself in the face. And then your mom finally gets sick of you, and you find some gal who’s willing to take you in. “Hey, can I stay with you? Hey, do you have a good job? Hey, do you have no discernment? Great, I’ve been waiting to meet you.”

You men need to repent of a whole culture of adolescence that says, “I don’t take responsibility for myself.” First things first. Take responsibility for yourself financially, spiritually, totally. Then get married. Take responsibility for the well-being of that woman. Then have children. Take responsibility for the well-being of those children. And as you work your job, take responsibility for the well-being of your company, so that you might serve it well, that it might provide what is needed for the life of your family.

What this means, men, quite frankly, you’re not going to have a lot of time for hobbies. Some guys are like, “What about hang gliding?” Serious? “What about golfing? What about fishing? What about hunting? What about all my toys and all my hobbies?” Here’s the bottom line. If you make your priorities your priorities, if you make your responsibilities your responsibilities, it’s not a sin to have hobbies, but you may not have time for them, or you might need to find things that include your wife and children. Your six-month-old probably is not into rock climbing, right? Your six-year-old daughter probably is not into hunting. You may need to find something else to do, so that your priorities can be your priorities, and your responsibilities can be your responsibilities. Don’t try and make your responsibilities fit around your hobbies. Let your responsibilities be your first priorities.

TOUGH AND TENDER, LIKE JESUS

Now, I want to say this, as well. When it comes to men, as I teach this, it always gets misunderstood. Every, I think, media interview I’ve ever done, I get whacked like a piñata on this issue. “Oh, Mark’s a chauvinist. He’s a misogynist.” I don’t even know how to give a massage. And all these horrible things get said about me. I’m not a massage therapist. And what happens is that it gets completely misinterpreted because outside of biblical thinking, the culture has no categories for what the Bible teaches.

So, let me say this for men. The essence of masculinity is to be like Jesus Christ. Jesus is the perfect man, and this means, and I’ve said it before, I’ll say it again, it’s to be both simultaneously tough and tender. To be a real man, you’ve got to be tough and tender, as Jesus was.

Let me ask you this. When you think through the life of Jesus, can you think of times that he was tough? Yeah. Religious blockheads, he’s getting into arguments. He’s holding his ground. He’s being arrested. He tells the truth on trial. He gets crucified. Pretty tough, pretty tough.

Can you think of times when Jesus was really tender? He’s sweet. A woman’s been bleeding for years, and he heals her. Little children come and sing and dance around him, and he welcomes them, super tender.

I’ll ask you a question. Is it masculine for a man to go ice skating and watch the play *Cinderella*? Yes or no? It all depends, doesn’t it? Context is everything. If it’s guys that I know, “Hey, what’s up, bro? What are you doing?” “I don’t know. I was thinking cage fighting, chicken wings, or Hank wants to go ice skating and watch *Cinderella*. And me and the guys, we were talking about it down at the job site, and we were thinking that would be incredible. We could ice skating and work on our moves, and then we could go watch *Cinderella* and go drink green tea and talk about our feelings. That would be fantastic.” Not super manly—but let me say this. That’s what I did recently. Now, not exactly like that. Let me explain what happened.

Every year, one of my traditions with my daughters, as I prepare them to one day be married, is I want to, after the Lord Jesus, be the biggest man in their life. And then when another man comes along that Jesus, and I, and their mom, and they all agree on, then we’ll talk about what’s next. So, I take my daughters out and we spend time together, but every Christmas, it’s kind of a big tradition. They get all dressed up. I get all dressed up. We get our photo taken, and we go out for a daddy Christmas date.

So, my eight-year-old daughter, Alexie, I asked her, “What do you want to do this year, sweetie pie?” She’s like, “I want to go ice skating. I want to go out to a nice, fancy candlelight dinner.” She loves going to the Space Needle. “And then I want to go watch the play, *Cinderella*.” So, that’s what I did. I went ice skating. I’ll just say this publicly. If preaching doesn’t work out, that’s not a backup vocational plan for me. I’m no good at it. But I loved ice skating with my daughter. I held her hand. We got to ice skate.

We went out to dinner, and I got to pull her chair out, and seat her, and by candlelight visit with her. I started crying over dinner. I looked at my little girl, and she’s just smiling at me. She looked at me. She started talking to me. “Daddy, I love you. I’m so glad that I have a Christian daddy.” I started crying. We prayed together. I held her hand.

We went and got in the car and went to the play, walk in. I said, “Honey, here’s your seat.” She said, “No, here’s my seat.” She sat on my lap for two hours. She watched *Cinderella*; I watched her. She was leaning forward smiling, mesmerized the whole time. I love being tender with my kids. I hug, I kiss. I’m a super ridiculously affectionate dad. I’m that guy. But I can also be really tough for my family, and I can be really tender with my family.

PRACTICAL HELPS FOR COVENANT HEADS

So, here are some practical helps for covenant heads, because you guys need something to do. You need it real practical. What we don't need is another generation of nerds that have a theology of marriage and a wife who's unloved! I've met men who have written books on marriage, and their wife is not flourishing, and they are not friends, and it's not going well! And I've not met one, I've met many! What we don't need, men, is just a theology of marriage. We need a theology of marriage that leads to a biography in marriage.

So, I'm going to give you guys some things to do. And for you nerds, for you guys who read all the footnotes and think, "Well, I know what *kephale* means in the Greek." Yeah, if your wife is not smiling, you're a hypocrite. I get angry. I'm a little tough. I'll be tender again right now. So, here are some things you can do to make a big difference.

1. GET INVOLVED IN A GOOD CHURCH.

Number one, get involved in a good church, because in a church, you're going to get teaching. You're going to get modeling. You're going to build friendships and community. You're going to get to know other families. You're going to see how they do it, and they're going to help you to become more like Jesus to your wife and children.

Men should pick the church. Husbands, fathers should pick the church! Too often, the wife picks the church. She says, "Great women's ministry, great children's ministry." Guy walks in and says, "Doesn't really work for me." Because the number one reason a man chooses a church is he looks at the senior leader or leaders and says, "I'll follow him." Most guys make their decision in the first minute. They think, "He's tender, but that's not the guy I want to be."

You men choose the church, and you women, yes, it's fine to have women's programs. It's fine to have children's programs. But do you know what's even better? A really godly husband who's fired up about Jesus and takes responsibility for you and the kids. It's far better to go to a church that he's excited about, and you're less excited about, than to try to drag him to a church that you're excited about, and he's less excited about, because every time he'll choose football.

So, men, get involved in a good church. Let me ask you this question. Which church are you a member of? Where are you involved? Where are you in community? Where are you serving? What's your community group? Who are your family friends? Who are you encouraging your wife to build friendship with and your children to get to know, and letting them see other family systems, so that your family might grow in godliness? Are you helping get the kids up and take them to whatever service or class that there is, or are you hoping your wife forgot it's Sunday again?

2. AGREE ON WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS.

Number two, agree on what the Bible says. Do you want to have a brutal marriage? Marry someone—you, who are single, hear me on this. Statistically, if you are of one religion, and you marry someone who doesn't hold to that religion, your odds of divorce go up 120 percent. A brutal marriage, somebody's a Christian and the other person is atheist, agnostic, Buddhist, Jewish, whatever. A bad marriage is where you have the same religion, but you have different theological beliefs, and you want to go to different churches. Those marriages are significantly higher to end in divorce. So, it's not just enough to marry a Christian. You've got to marry a Christian who agrees with you.

The best marriages, least likely to lead to divorce, highest rates of joy for husbands and wives, among all categories, he's a Christian, she's a Christian. They agree theologically in their beliefs, and they both want to attend the same church. They're the happiest of all.

This means you need to agree on primary issues: that the Bible is God's perfect Word, that Jesus is God's perfect Son, that the cross is their perfect plan, but it also means you need to agree on secondary issues. Secondary issues may be acceptable insofar as you being a Christian, but they will lead to real problems in your marriage. Because if she says, "I want to go to a church where there's a woman preacher," and he doesn't, that's going to be an issue, because it means that they both view the Bible completely differently. If she says, "I want to be Catholic," and he says, "I want to be Protestant," that's going to be very difficult. If he says, "I want to go to a church where the men lead," and she says, "I can't leave that church, because that women's Bible study is the most important thing in the world to me," they've got a problem.

You have to agree on what the Bible says. Are you going to have children or not? The Bible says they're a blessing. Who's going to go to work and pay the bills? Him or her, or him and her, or like 1 percent or less of men, is he going to stay home as the stay-at-home dad? All of this is theological. It's not just cultural. It's not just practical. It's deep down in the roots biblical. You need to agree on what the Bible says. So, my next question to you is, "What do you not agree on?" Because if you don't even agree as to what God says, you'll be fighting with one another, not for one another.

3. WORSHIP AT HOME TOGETHER.

Number three, worship at home together. Men, lead by example. Pray in front of your family. Some of you say, "I don't know how to." Then pray bad. Be honest. Have a Bible. Open it up. Let them see dad open the Bible and submitting to the Word of God. Sit under preaching. Sit under teaching as an act of worship, so that you can be in authority and under authority. Some of you guys love to be in authority, but you chafe being under authority.

This means, as well, buy good books for everybody in your family. Buy books for your wife. Buy books for your kids. Put good literature in their hands. Encourage them to read, to bring you their questions and discuss with them. Read books or chapters of the Bible during the week, and have your wife do the same, and spend your date night talking about what you're learning.

If you don't know what books to buy, I've put together a list, so did Grace and so did our kids, at PastorMark.tv. If you just click on "books," there's a whole section there of recommended reading. We've got books for men, and books for women, and I asked all our kids, "What are your favorite books?" And, man, encourage, encourage your family to read, because leaders are readers, and we want you to raise a family of leaders, so they must be readers.

A couple of other things. Redeem your commute. You can download sermons, lectures, whole seminary courses from, like, Covenant Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary. They're free online. So, men, redeem your commute. Go to seminary for free in your car. It beats talk radio. I can assure you of that.

Spend time having dinner together most nights. Pray together. Journal prayer requests together. Pray together. Pray with your kids every single day. Pray over them. Pray with your wife every single day. Pray over her. Grace and I, every night, we end the day snuggling, praying, snoring to the glory of God and the joy of all people.

SHE IS THE REFEREE

Now, here's the final point. The husband is the what? Head. Who decides whether or not he's doing a good job? Most men will say, "I'm the head. I decide." Aha! No. Ephesians 5:21, she is the referee! In that whole section we read, Ephesians 5:22–33, it is prefaced with this statement: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." What this means is, if she says, "You're not tender enough," you're not tender enough. "You're not investing in the kids enough." What that means is you're not investing in the kids enough. She is the referee.

So, I'm going to ask you men to do this. You can buy one of these shirts somewhere for your wife, and it's your way of telling her, "I believe Ephesians 5:21. I am the head of the household, but you, you're the referee. You get to tell me whether or not I'm succeeding or failing, whether I'm helping or hindering." And let me submit to you, this is a very cute nightgown. Right? I'll stop right there before I have to fire myself.

Q&A WITH GRACE

Grace, honey, why don't you come on out, and we'll do some Q&A. So, I'll bring my wife out. *[Applauding]* You ready to do some Q&A, baby?

Grace: Sure.

Okay, we'll take questions. I'll read them right off the screen. All right, fire away.

"If a friend who professes to be a Christian is living with his girlfriend, who also professes to be a Christian—" [“If I know two vegans who eat steak—" I just don't even understand the question. How...?] *"How should we confront him as a professing brother in Christ?"*

Do you want to take that one?

Grace: Why don't you start?

Okay. Be tough. You can't come in and be tender. "Oh, buddy, I hate to hurt your feelings." No, you have taken one of God's daughters, and you are breaking covenant with God, and you are participating in fornication, and 1 Corinthians says that fornicators go to hell. Now, you can be forgiven, but it's such a big deal, Jesus died for it. So, don't turn it into, "Well, we're married in God's eyes." God's eyes are flaming red. He's not even blinking.

And so, yeah, I mean, this is where— and you deal with him separately. And if you're friends with her, you send the gals to go meet with her. You send the guys to go meet with him, and you try in every way to get in the middle of— if they're in a church, you get the leadership involved. If they have godly family, you get them involved.

And the truth is that even, statistically, those who live together before they're married, they have a higher rate of divorce. It's because, see, living together and sleeping together is not practice for marriage and covenant. It's practice for divorce and contract. And so if you love them and you love Jesus, you've got to tell them he says no. And if they say, "We don't care," then you'll have to maybe do evangelism, because maybe they're not Christians.

Grace: That's what I was going to say. I think I would start—at least with the gal, if I was talking to the gal separately—I would start just asking gospel questions and see if she truly knew Jesus or if that was just something from her upbringing or something someone told her to say, if she really, why she felt she was a believer, if she's going to claim that, and just start there. And then if you realize that she doesn't really know about the Bible and Jesus, then you can start to—

Instruct her.

Grace: Move into the evangelism.

And, ladies, Jesus has to always be the most important man in your life, and your husband is the second most important man, but in this occasion, this woman has put the man above Jesus. And it came down to, "I'm going to obey Jesus or the man. I'm going to serve Jesus or the man. I'm going to draw near to Jesus or the man." And she chose Jesus—no, she chose the man. And that's idolatry, and that is turning the man into a lord, something that's not fit for him.

The Bible says to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto the Lord. So, what we offer our body to is an act of worship. That

means that they are pagans, that their bed is a temple, and when they are together, it is a worship act to a demon god. It's not just an alternative lifestyle. It's deep. It's deep sin. It's deep rebellion.

And we were sleeping together before I got saved, and you came back to Christ, and we repented, and we stopped sleeping together, and we learned what the Bible said. We got our pastor involved. So, if they will do that, we'll see what God does, but the goal can never be, "We have to save this relationship." The goal has to be, "I need to build that relationship [with God], and then we'll see what happens in this relationship."

Second one.

"How can I, as a wife, lovingly and respectfully encourage my husband to be tough and tender, as the leader, especially when I struggle with feeling a need to lead, but a conviction not to?"

Grace: Well, this is definitely something that I've discussed with a lot of people. Mark and I have had more the learning, as he talked about tonight, learning to be tender piece, and he's always loved me and the kids, but learning what that looks like for us has been a new experience. And I think women want to step up and protect when they don't feel protected, and so when you're asking him to be tough and tender, I mean, they're two different issues. So, encouragement, it covers both. You want to constantly encourage your husband. If there are things in him, even if they seem small, start there. Encourage those things, and he will want to rise up to be more, to be more for you, to be more, if you have kids, to be more for the kids. And then he'll want to, by God's grace, want to desire to read the Scripture and see what the Scripture says about being tough and tender.

And also praying for him, that his heart would be open to learning those things. It's not something that happens overnight, and you can either encourage or discourage that from happening, as a wife. As a helper, as a wife, we're supposed to help our husband toward godliness, just like they're supposed to help, they're supposed to lead us and teach us what respect means. And so we need to help them see what that love, and tenderness, and what toughness is, just even saying, you know, "Can I explain a situation to you and see what you would think, and can we talk about it?" Just opening up the conversation can be a big deal to start with.

And I would say encouraging your husband in those godly friendships with other men, that are maybe a little more mature in certain areas and really affirming those, not in a motherly or patronizing way, but, you know, having those be couple friends, having those be family friends, having those be the people that you go to for counsel and encouraging that. Because sometimes, with men, they hear it differently and receive it differently from another guy; whereas, from the wife over and over, it could sound like nagging. Yet, when another guy says it, it's like, "Okay, I got it," or the guy's able to model it for them. Because a lot of times, guys will sometimes—not always—but guys will think they're doing a good job, and they're not, because they've never seen it, and seeing it helps them then grown in doing it themselves.

We'll do another one.

"What does it look like to lovingly walk through my wife's sin with her, as her head, while still calling her to repentance and not enabling her sin?"

Grace: Well, I mean, it kind of depends on the personality of the woman, but even women that appear tough, when you call them to repentance, they aren't always as tough as they may have appeared. Repentance is something that all of us, whether you're husband or wife, but as husbands you need to pray that your wife is convicted by the Holy Spirit. You can call sin out, but you can't make her repent. The Holy Spirit's job is to do that.

And so, honestly, for a woman to feel safe is key in repentance. If she's going to be vulnerable with her sin, vulnerable with wanting to change and have you see her in a very raw, just vulnerable state, you're going to need to feel safe to her. And if she's had any abuse or any harm in her past, whether it's through family or relationships of any kind, that can even be a harder situation. So, it's just very important, I would say, to be safe and to pray over her. Pray with her. Pray for her. If there's things that you don't feel like you can talk to her about, yet, because she would repel that in that moment, then pray. Pray for the timing when God would soften her heart toward listening to whatever the sin is.

I think, for Mark and I, when he comes to me, when we're not in the midst of an argument or disagreement, when he comes to me and says, "You know, I noticed this the other day, and I'm concerned for you," or "I love you, and I want to see you flourish in this area," or if a wife feels like the husband really is caring and not just inconvenienced by her sin, she's going to be more drawn out to repentance.

That was good. Good job. All right, let's do another one.

"If a child grows up and makes bad decisions relationally, is that always a reflection on the father? Is it possible for a man to be a great dad, teach his kids the Bible, et cetera, et cetera, and they still go astray?"

Yes, it is. There are examples in the Bible where godly parents have children who act in a way that is ungodly. Again, what I would say for the fathers is it may not be your fault. Now, as fathers, we can always look and say, "It probably is to some degree, 2 percent, 3 percent, 10 percent my fault. I didn't do this right. I didn't say that right. I didn't deal with these issues in their formative years, so maybe I bear some responsibility, and I can even repent to my child or children about that. You know, I didn't serve you the best here. I made a mistake there, or I was lazy or chose comfort over Christ in this season of your life and didn't pursue you as I ought." So, we can own, as fathers, our failures and our sins. But even if it's not your fault, as a father, you still want to make it your responsibility. Now, it has to be their responsibility, as well, but you want to make it your responsibility.

I'll give you an example. We were down in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a little while ago, and I had the honor of preaching the gospel at Mars Hill Albuquerque, and I saw forty-two baptisms on that Sunday at our church, and many of them were Hispanic families. And what I noticed about Hispanic families, they're very different in that when one person gets to go forward for baptism, the whole family goes forward, like forty people around the baptismal tank. Right? I'm in Seattle, where there's like one single guy, you know, and then he Tweets it so others can be aware of it. Like, he doesn't— You know, he doesn't really have a real community. There it's family, and it's generations. So, we saw grandfathers baptizing their sons and grandsons, granddaughters and daughters. I mean, it was beautiful.

And there was one patriarch, this older Hispanic man, he came up to me, and he was pretty choked up. You know, guy's guy. And he said, "Pastor, please pray for me." I said, "For what?" He said, "My children now are walking with the Lord, and my grandchildren are walking with the Lord, but one of my sons isn't." And he said, "It's my family, it's my responsibility." He said, "So, I'm meeting with him this week, and I'm talking to him about his sin and Jesus, and I'm asking people to pray, that he would give me the words to say and that he would give my son the ears to hear." What he's not saying is, "My son's not walking with the Lord, and it's all my fault," but what he is saying is, "I love my son, and I want to, to some degree, make it my responsibility to bring Jesus to him and to bring him to Jesus." Does that make sense? There's a glory there, not a guilt, and that's what I'm saying here.

There are times when even bad parents have good kids. There are times when good parents have bad kids. But even if you are a parent whose children go astray, and you don't feel primarily at fault in the sight of God, your heart should still break enough to make it your responsibility to pray, your responsibility to encourage, your responsibility to pursue, your responsibility to bring them to Jesus in any way you possibly can. And that's what I'm talking about. That's what I'm talking about.

"I have a divorce in my past because of adultery. How do I move beyond that to lead my family well?"

Grace: Yeah, I think, again, fear is probably involved in that. To break that cycle, thinking of legacy and what God can do through you to stop what has happened in the past, and if you have fears, to go to the Lord with those fears, and ask him to give you strength and wisdom, and read through the Scriptures to see how to be a godly leader and how to have a godly marriage, so that you don't have to have adultery and some of the same sins from your past. We all have things that we carry into our marriages, and we have to deal with those, so that we don't create that same scenario. So, I would just say, you know, if there are fears in there, give those to the Lord. Ask him to take away those fears and replace them with his confidence, his righteousness, his strength to do different in your legacy.

I can't tell from the question, but it seems like their spouse committed adultery. I would say forgive them, so that you don't let bitterness take root in your heart, and then if and when a time has passed, and maybe you're moving toward another relationship, which may be in your future, to include your family and your church family in that, and to go slowly and cautiously and carefully, particularly if you have children, so as not to jump in too prematurely and repeat that same kind of real grief.

The truth is the Bible does speak of adultery as a potential condition for divorce. But even at Mars Hill, we have seen adultery forgiven and couples reconciled. I've even seen couples that were divorced come to faith in Christ in repentance, and I've officiated their remarriage with their children serving as the flower girl and the ring bearer. And so I'm not saying that'll happen, and I'm not saying there aren't conditions for remarriage, but I would say, you know, forgive them. See in your own life if there were any ways that you contributed to the devastation of the marriage, and then grow in godliness, being honest with your kids, not in a way to embitter them against your spouse, but to instruct them and inform them without lying to them.

And then if and when God should allow you to remarry, moving forward in that potential relationship very cautiously and carefully and prayerfully in the context of community. But as a single parent, I think that's one of the hardest jobs in the world, because now you've got to do the mom work and the dad work, and it's a lot, and that's where you're going to need your family and your church family to be heavily invested and involved, to help make up the lack that usually is taken care of by two parents. And so if you're at Mars Hill, we love you, and this is what Community Groups are for, and relationships are for, and other families are for.

And, you know, I'll just, I'll say this about my wife publicly. She would never say it. There are some women who are very close to our family whose husbands have either died, so the women are widows, or whose husbands have committed adultery, and so now these are single mothers, and they play a lot with our kids, and Grace invests in them, and we try to help and support in a variety of ways these families, because we love them, and we want our children and our home, and sometimes even my presence, to be part of the contribution to the service of that family.

I would then encourage other men in the church, that do love their wives and kids and have intact families, to always keep your heart, and your door, and your wallet open to widows, orphans, those in need—that would include single moms in our day—so that, so that our church family helps to make up for the lack of male affection and leadership, in an appropriate way, in their family. And it's a great honor, as a man, to be able to do that, and I would encourage you men to take that as a mantle of opportunity and responsibility, because the church really is a family, and these really are brothers and sisters, and their children really are a part of our extended family.

I think we'll close it there. That's a good place to end. Could you conclude our time in prayer, sweetie pie? Thanks.

Dear Lord, thank you for the men and women here. Lord, thank you for your Word that instructs men that they are to lead. I pray that you would impress that on their hearts even more, that they would come to you and pray for wisdom in how to do that with their specific wife and their specific children, if they have them. Lord, I pray that the desires of their heart would be to lead this next generation, to lead a new legacy of boys into manhood

that loves you, and honors you, and respects women and leads them well, as you have loved us, and that they would display that to their families. Thank you so much. In Jesus' name, amen.

RESPOND

Amen. At this point, I'll give you a few action items. We're going to ask the financial stewards, at this point, to collect our offering, and as they begin to do that, we are giving to the church family, so that this family might lovingly care for as many people as possible. As we're in this series, it's obviously going to raise a lot of deep issues, which means we want to open the doors and help as many people as we possibly can. Many of those people are not Christians, or they're brand-new Christians. And so for those of us who are Christians, we give to help our church family grow by welcoming others to Jesus and us. So, please do give generously now.

In addition, we're going to call you to respond, and some of you may not be Christians, and that really is the most important relationship, first things first, turning from sin, trusting in Jesus. He took responsibility, though your life and your sin is your fault. And so you give him your sin, by faith, and you receive from him forgiveness and love, and today start that relationship with God through Jesus Christ. And before you can work on any other relationship, that's the most important relationship.

In addition, for you who are husbands, I want you to, before you partake of Communion, where we remember the broken body and shed blood of Jesus and how he is our covenant head, I want you to apologize to your wife for the ways in which you've not been a good head, and pray together before you take Communion.

And you wives, if you have in any way been complicit in his abdication of his responsibility, you've not really told him the truth, you've not really encouraged him as you ought or rebuked him as he needs, I want you to be honest with him and say, "Honey, here are some areas you could be a better head, and we, or I, really need you right away to step up and to do what God tells you to do."

In addition, for those of you who are single, this is where you ask yourself, "Am I even taking responsibility for myself? And in what ways am I being irresponsible? And if that is the case, I need to repent of that for the sake of my relationship with Jesus. Whether or not I ever get married, this is required for that relationship, and it is primary for preparation for the marriage relationship that God might have for me in Christ."

And then we're going to take Communion, remembering Jesus died, Jesus rose. He takes responsibility for the sin that is our fault. He is our covenant head. And when we sing to him, we're singing with great enthusiasm and joy. Just like there is music at a wedding, we are the church, the bride of Christ collectively, and Jesus is like a great groom, and every good wedding needs a soundtrack, and we are the band. Amen? All right, thank you.

Note: This transcript has been edited for readability.