

The young couple had only been married a short while. Still everything was perfect. Every day they were up with the sun to go to work. Each would joyfully head off to their given tasks knowing it would be another glorious day. Mostly they spent the day working side by side, and enjoyed it. The evenings brought a nice meal joyfully prepared by both of them. Everything around them was available to eat so there was always plenty. Entertainment always included a relaxing stroll. Then some much needed time with God. Life was perfect. Their marriage was perfect.

But this husband and wife got caught up in some major issues. She decided to be in charge. She was falling and dragging the marriage down with her. Oh, but the husband couldn't escape blame. He certainly should have done something to stop her. But he was lazy and was content letting her lead. That seemed easier than saying no to her. And with one fateful move, one bite, Adam and Eve's marriage was destroyed. Ever since, all people have lived with sin in every part of their lives. Marriage was designed perfect by God. But every married couple, every single person wanting to get married, or not wanting to get married must realize that their marriage is or will be tainted with sin because of Adam and Eve.

Usually I believe in "ladies first." But God established roles in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world. If Adam and Eve had lived those roles as husband and wife you might be hearing something different this morning. Adam was created first. He was created to be servant head of the house. Eve was created from Adam. Eve was created to be the servant helper. That order of creation is still in place today. So how can we ever hope to have a healthy marriage? By ourselves we can't. It's not until you've read and pondered Paul's letter to the Ephesians where Paul takes us inside the marriage relationship to see...

**A healthy marriage from God**  
**Something to say to husbands**  
**Something to say to wives**

So guys, listen up. For the next couple of minutes God is talking to you exclusively. Ladies, listen because it's important. **"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."** Yikes! That's some heavy expectations for husbands. In fact, just in sheer number of verses God has more to say to husbands than wives. That's not because men need more explanation. Men have a greater responsibility in the marriage relationship. Let that sink in. Men should do more, bear more burden, and face tougher scrutiny because they have more expectations and a greater responsibility when it comes to marriage. God expects that you will be like Christ in his love for the church.

Review in your mind what Christ did for the church. Everyone on earth was sinful. Those sinful people, you and me included, couldn't put enough good works together to buy their way into heaven. So God sent his own son, Jesus. Perfect life, innocent death on the cross, and plenty of suffering. Christ sacrificed himself fully for the church to save it. What he gave made the church holy, perfect in God's eyes. **"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."** The things Jesus did were all with the church in mind. The church benefited from everything Christ did. Jesus sacrificed even his own comfort for the wellbeing of the church. And when it was all said and done he had purified the church with all its believers so they had no blemishes or spots. The church was holy because of Christ Jesus.

Husbands are to be willing to do the same for their wives. But it's hard you might say. "I've got my own needs, my own life. Shouldn't I get a couple nights with the guys? Can't I use my paycheck for what I want? Besides, she doesn't always appreciate me. She complains and doesn't even say thanks. She seems to want to take control of everything so I give in, I give up." I'm sorry, where in the Bible does it say that Jesus gave himself for a church that loved him and thanked him? Where does it say you get to say it's her fault you're not performing in your role as husband? Husbands love without any expectation of anything in return. Being that kind of husband in a healthy marriage isn't going to happen. Your sinfulness is just too strong for that.

Return to look at Christ. He's your motivation. Christ loved the church, loved you. **"We are members of his body."** Jesus cares for you like someone cares for their own body. Every spot of sin, every blemish of blame, everything that makes you unholy Jesus seeks to save. You are his body, both you and your wife. The close relationship with the body makes Christ willing to shed blood to save you. You're being cared for so that no spot of sin is found on you. Husbands you now have the huge responsibility of looking after your wife as you look after your own body. **"In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies."** As a husband you owe this to your wife. You wouldn't boss your body around so don't boss your wife around. Instead lovingly care for her. Do everything with her best interests at heart. Make her needs your highest priority. Make her happy and love her as Christ loved you. Nothing is more important. Christ Jesus loved you and his love for you provides you the motivation to love your wife in a healthy marriage.

Wives, your turn. Husbands pay attention, this is still important for you. **"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord."** Much has been made about that word submit. Maybe some of you are squirming because of it. Submit sounds like the man will never listen or won't care about your opinions. Submit sounds negative. God doesn't think of it that way. Submission is proper and has to do with order, not importance or salvation. Christ submitted to God. The church submits to Christ. Both those are good, not negative. Submission is soldiers lining up behind the general or a team behind their coach. Both respect and follow the authority knowing neither will ask them to do anything that's not best for them.

“But what about being a powerful woman? Won’t he me his slave basically? I’ll have to do all the dirty work and he just gets to boss me around. I have to stand up for my own rights. Plus he’s lazy and doesn’t ever make a decision. How can I respect someone who doesn’t seem to care, especially about me?” I’m sorry. Where does the Bible say that a wife is to be concerned with how her husband acts before she does her God given role? Where does the Bible give the wife the right to wait for a perfect loving husband before submitting? Of course, like husbands, being the kind of submitting wife the Bible wants is impossible.

The relationship of Christ to the church provides the wife with her example and motivation. This time we look at it from the church’s perspective. **“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.”** God gives wives the perfect motivation. The church needs its head, Christ Jesus. He’s the Savior. Everything in the lives of believers is ordered so the goal of heaven is reached. There’s no question where believers connected to Christ are going. Jesus is the perfect head that all believers willingly submit to. That’s a wife’s motivation. No husband is perfect like Christ, but you can’t look for that. Wives with the example of Christ and the church can submit to their husbands as to the Lord in a healthy marriage.

The perfection of the Garden of Eden is gone. Adam and Eve’s marriage fell into sin. Now all marriages, all relationships, and all single people are sinful before God. But God repaired that in Christ. He has done the same for marriages to this day, in Christ. Husbands and wives, and those that desire to become one someday, get instructions for a healthy marriage. Neither should look to see how the other is doing first before living up themselves to God’s commands. Husbands need not force wives to submit and wives need not force husbands to love. Husbands love as Christ loved the church. Submission and respect will follow. Wives submit and respect as the church submits and respects Christ. Love will follow. God’s got the solution to a happy healthy marriage. Loving husbands and submitting wives clearly focused on Christ.