

Behind Closed Doors

Sun, 1/12 3:23PM 36:14

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

husband, wife, paul, christ, marriage, passage, verse, ephesians, church, god, wives, exhortation, submit, people, read, roles, life, other words, notice, implying

SPEAKERS

Kevin Schwamb

 Kevin Schwamb 00:00

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 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. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. This morning, we're going to resume our study on Ephesians, which we had put a pin in it right before Advent, but coming back to it, and I have to admit that I think every pastor especially when you get to Ephesians 5:22 through 3:3 Here comes to this text with some trepidation. For one reason, at least for myself, Heather and I have been married now over 40 years. And I have to tell you, I'm still not an expert on marriage. And then also, as a pastor, I think I speak for most pastors, you realize, as you come to this passage, that probably in your congregation, you have had people who've gone through the difficult process of divorce. You have people who may be in the process of getting divorced. You also may have people who have been widowed.

And so it's a difficult it's a sensitive passage to talk about something that once was reality in their life and is not. Or you may have someone who's single who would love to be in a godly marriage, and by God's providence is not and yet I'm confident and convinced that when Paul says that scripture is given for our instruction and encouragement that he's Also including in that this passage. And so I hope no matter where you might be in your station in life, you will walk away from this passage encouraged and instructed. So open your Bibles to Ephesians five if you're not already there. And just a quick sort of review as we've gone through the letter of Ephesians. The first three chapters are all doctrine and instruction. In other words, Paul's kind of told us, we have been called in Christ Jesus, by God's grace to be holy and blameless. He's talked about the radical changes happening Ephesians to you used to be like this. Now in Christ, you are like this. This is your new identity in Jesus Christ. And Ephesians three, he started to talk to us even more about the reality of being in Christ and as addressed his prayer for believers, which is a prayer for us as well. And then the last part of the letter four through six are taking all of those realities in Christ. And in a sense now, bringing them and saying, here's how it should look in your life and in my life. And I think in particular, as you get to Ephesians, five and six, Paul now goes behind closed doors, to say, here's what an authentic relationship with Christ should look like. And he keys in and in verses 22 of chapter five through chapter six, verse nine, how key in on three particular relationships, the relationship of marriage between a husband and a wife. Then we'll talk about the relationship between parents and children. And then finally, between slaves and masters, which we'll see has relevance to us in the workplace. So three areas that often we might say having somewhat behind closed doors. But they reveal so much about whether our faith in Christ is an authentic faith. So the way we're going to approach this passage on marriage is to realize that Paul will hang biblical principles on three pegs here. The first peg will be exhortation to wives. Then I'll give exhortations to husbands. And then he'll bring it to a close by giving an exhortation to husbands and wives. And those are the three pegs that he puts before us, for us to kind of latch on to and hold on to. But you'll notice the verse right before verse 22, verse 21, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Paul gives a very broad general principle there that affects all of us in our relationships with one another, but now he's going Going to move specifically into the area of what does a Christian marriage look like? What is the design the model that God has set for us? And so looking at verse 22, through 24, the first peg would be exhortation to wives. And let me just begin with by reading verse 22. Wives, submit to your husband's as to the Lord. I don't need to tell you that. Just reading that verse can infuriate some people can make them accuse the Bible of being sexist, of saying, here's an example where scripture is not recognizing the equality of women and other aspects of being a woman. And that is completely taken out of context. That's what our culture has kind of pushed us to think the Bible is implying here by this Christian definition. But if we step back from the text, we want to look at this word, this word submit, which has unfortunately, sort of gathered a lot of negative connotations

to it is a very sound, biblical word. It means to willingly place oneself under God's design. That's what Paul's saying here, realize that marriage has been instituted by God. It's not something that man has created and thought up. But it's been designed by God. And in fact, Paul is so certain of that. You'll see later in this passage, oh quote from Genesis 224, saying, I'm going right back to God's pattern here. Now the problem is we do need to parse out over time, there can be generational things that sometimes become attached to the roles in a marriage that may not be biblical and we need to separate those out? for Paul saying here is here's the the responsibility of the wife is to willingly place herself under the position that God has given her husband in a Christian marriage. And notice very clearly says wives submit to your husband's very important that we understand this qualification, the sphere in which Paul is dealing with. So he's not saying here if you're a man, it's sinful for you to be in a workplace where a woman is your boss. Now, Paul's dealing here with marriage with the family. This does not address outside the family, in our world, in our workplaces. That's not the role that he's saying here. So a wife is to willingly place herself under the design that God has for marriage. And notice if you go down to verse 24, it says, Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. So you have two verses devoted to exhortation, two wives. In those two verses three times, the word submit, is repeated. willingly Place yourself under. Now once you ask yourself, why would that be repeated three times? And Paul's not being sexist here, you know, he's not just saying, Well, you know, wives, you really need to do your part. Because he's going to say, I'm getting to the husband's just be patient here. But if it's said three times that tells us this is not something that a wife naturally feels inclined to do. I need to ask yourself, why Well isn't part of our sinful nature that we push back against God. For all of us. Think of in Genesis when when God is issuing out the consequences of the sin, He speaks of that that, you know, Eve now, there's going to be contention there, between you and Adam, that in a sense, you will want to exert your will over Adam. But that's part of our sinful nature. We want what we want. We're selfish creatures. And so Paul says two wives in a very pastoral way that you need to submit willingly Place yourself under God's design here. But you'll notice as I was starting to say in verse 24, he says, to your husband's in everything. Now again, here is a danger. You could take that phrase and just run with it. Paul's not saying, well wife just has to do whatever husband says, no matter what if they're physically abusive, they're emotionally abusive. Now Paul's not saying that he addresses other situations where he says, you know, you need to take concern here for your physical safety, for cases of desertion. But when he says in everything, he's assuming we're understanding the broader context, in everything that agrees with the will of God. And we'll see a passage later where it tells us clearly, if if a husband is pushing his wife into doing things are in disobedience to God's word, her obedience must be to God. And that's certainly I think, a smaller concept of what often happens but we need to keep in mind here in everything is a qualified in accordance with the will of God So Paul's exhortation is also met and further explained by another apostle,

I'd like you to go to First Peter chapter three. And you might want to just put your bullets in there because we'll come back to that passage. But I want us to look at First Peter chapter three, and verses one, and two. Now I mentioned that for many people, they will hear the word Submit. And their thought is, this is outdated. This is sexist. But I want to give you an understanding of how advanced the scriptures were, in terms of the culture of the day in which these words are given. In other words, Christianity was not suppressing the role of women in marriage is actually elevating their status in Christ Jesus, and that elevation would transform what it meant to be a husband and a wife and godly marriage in First Peter three, yet Peter giving some expectations on marriage. And it's in the context that as a church has grown as more people have come to Christ, we're entering a new situation what happens when you have a wife who knows Christ, but a husband who doesn't? And what happens maybe if that change happened after they were married. So listen carefully what Peter says in chapter three verses one and two. Wives in the same way, be submissive to your husband's. So if any of them do not believe the word, they may be one over without words, by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your life. Now, this is not a guarantee. It's not saying you do this and definitely Your husband is going to confess Christ as Lord and Savior. But notice it shifts the respect sponsibility here, because one of the things you find in Ephesians, five is these expectations are without conditions. He doesn't say wives, you make sure you submit to your husband, as long as you feel that they appreciate you. And I think that's where we run into problems on both sides of this equation. We want to add conditions. As a wife, we might want to say, Sure, I'd be willing to submit as long as he's doing his part. And as a husband, we might say, Well, I'm willing to submit and apply these things as long as they're doing what they should be doing. Notice Paul removes that from this. Peter removes that from that and says, Here's God's design, here's your responsibility. But what's very striking is in First Peter three, Peter tells the wives, live out your faith in Christ. Now that is completely countercultural What was expected in Paul's day and in Peters day that a wife was to automatically assume the religion of her husband? No questions asked, whatever faith whatever religious beliefs, your husband had those now were your beliefs. You left whatever you believe before and assume that new set of beliefs. Peter saying no. You don't do that in Christ. You live out your testimony before them. And we kind of read that I think we miss, you know, living in that day and age and hearing this, you'd be like, wait a minute, that's that's not what everybody says. The same way. We might hear the exhortation wives submit to your husbands. And we're thinking Wait a minute, that's that's not what everyone says. Or we want to imply just Well, there's equal submission. There's no kind of differences of roles. Paul's very clear as We go back to Ephesians five, that when he talks about the motivation for this, on the wife's perspective, it all comes back to as Christ as Christ. And we mustn't miss that. He says nothing here about the husband's reaction to this, or the husband's track record, what's that look like? Keep going back to as Christ. So look again at Ephesians five. And let me read verse 23, and 24, once again,

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 submit to their husbands in everything, notice the importance of headship there, and this is another term we need to define. What does Paul mean when he says Christ is the head of the Church, and the husband is the head of the wife. He's dealing here with a positional aspect, not a superiority aspect. It's not implying the husband is better than the wife. He's indicating a distinction of roles. Going back to the very Creation of Adam and Eve. And in that design, notice he speaks of how does Christ lead his church? hopefully none of us are thinking, well, I feel really oppressed because Christ is the head of the church. And we're like, No, we understand. He loves the church. He governs it. He unites us together. There's perfect freedom, in that godly headship. And now you start to see how maybe some of these pieces are coming together. If in that design, would this be the kind of structure that some would want to willingly place themselves, which would be for their benefit and their growth and their development? And will that carry over when we get into other relationships of Paul talks about? If we function according to God's design for them? Will we end up being blessed through our obedience? And so as you think about this passage, notice it's all tied to as to the Lord. Suddenly now the expectation the wise, is not just about marriage, it's actually about worship. It's about living out our faith in our marriage takes us to a whole new level. In ancient times, I've been reading some literature on how the ancient culture viewed Family and, and the emphasis on family the emphasis on marriage, in particular was children. So you could continue your line, that there is really nothing kind of a cultural standpoint about the importance of love. Romance was all about keeping your mind from becoming extinct. What a difference when you read what Paul saying here and aphasia's says nothing here about submitting so you can, you know, keep the line going. You know, it's all about just existence and, you know, legacy says no, this is all about worship. But that's the first peg exaptation two wives. Keep in mind, Paul spends two verses on wives. Now you get to expectations, two husbands, three times as many verses Dealing with husbands. So it's not just the thought of, well, you know, this is all loaded toward the husband, he's the head. Now Paul says, Let me talk to the husbands about God's design in marriage. And so you'll notice in verses 25 through 31, he breaks this down. And we'll take each part and sort of look at it that way. Notice verse 25. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. And a godly marriage, the husband is to love his wife completely. Now the word love here is the root for that word, a gaby, which, which isn't just just a romantic kind of emotional type of feeling, but it means a decision of the will. And I think all of us could probably say, we know there's people in our life, maybe even our family Could be a spouse where there's some times that we don't really feel like we love them a little aggravated. So Paul's not saying, well, husbands, you know, conjure up this feeling. Just Just be on the emotional side of this always feel like you love your life. And he says, make this a decision before God, an act of worship that you are going to love your wife completely. And once again,

Paul says, How does that look? Notice what he references there just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. There's the key to give up yourself to hand over a willingness. Now, I mentioned earlier that the sinful nature maybe in terms of the wife might surface and push back against the husband's leadership at times. But here's the flip side. For the husband, what's the pushback? He could be selfish. He could not want to give up. He doesn't always have the mind of Christ. But again, the comparison here is not well give yourself up as long as your wife is doing what she's supposed to do in the first couple of verses. No, no, this is all now between you and God. What's God's responsibility for you? But then you go to verse 26, and 27 it says, to make her holy cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain wrinkle, or any other blemish but holy and blameless. He moves from this picture of here's what Christ has done for his church, and then draws the analogy. What does this mean for husbands or husbands aren't to just love their wife completely. They are to love their wife purposefully. In other words, what should be the goal of a godly husband? He wants to see his wife grow in Christ. Now notice the terms use there were terms used for sacrificing, blameless, holy, radiant full of honor. Not just that you desire your wife to look presentable on the outside, but you desire her to reflect Christ. In other words, now we're getting into what is this like head position. It's a position in which the husband is ultimately bearing the way here of his wife spiritual growth and development. And what happens in the home with the kids and the grandkids? What influence our husbands exerting to see God being the center of their life. Now lived out before others. Contrary to personal, personal views on this, some people think the Puritans were just killjoys, you know, they didn't like anything they just wanted to pick apart. They had a lot to say about marriage, and a lot about the importance of love in marriage. And one of the things I liked is one of the Puritan counsels, that that sometimes was given was that a husband should strive that his wife's fault faults are only known by himself, and God. It's not an interesting thought that your wife's faults are only known by you and God. What a difference when we live in a day in an age where don't people love to talk about everybody's fault. And we're now even we've lost sort of that sense of shame over personal faults and In fact, today, many people could argue that if you have a lot of problems in your life, you're gonna get on a show. You might have your own reality show. It's almost as if we were more that and parade that. But a purposeful role in marriage is you don't ignore those things. But but by God's grace, you want to see those change not just in your spouse but in you. You also want to present yourself holy and blameless. So in other words, the responsibility of the husband is tremendous here. It is that you desire your wife sanctification, her growth in Christ. Now, you can't do that. Just like on the reverse side. You cannot make your spouse grow spiritually. But you can do everything possible to pray for them to demonstrate that in word and an action Going down to verses 28. And through 31. Paul says in this way, the notice again the connection with here's what Christ has done. In this way. husbands are to love their wives as their own body. He loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever

hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ as the church, who we are members of his body. A move to that thought not only if you're in a Christian marriage is your wife, your spouse, she's your brother, your sister in the Lord. How would it be concerned? We talk about being a family. And you notice here you have the exhortation that in the husband's love for his wife. The husband is to love his wife sacrificially that he is to do everything possible to feed and to nourish her. So just talking about providing for physical needs, but her emotional needs her spiritual needs that he knows and constantly works at knowing his wife. I haven't done this in a while, then you'll probably figure out why. Once in a while Heather and I will be talking about something. And I might say, you know, I know you like the back of my hand. And usually, I find out. I didn't really know her like I thought I did, but the back of my hand, but the thought is, are we striving to know our spouses to know them? And probably our immediate reaction for some is as well of course, I know them. You know, we've been married such and such time. Yeah, but I think we all realize there are days when we're suddenly like, I didn't get that one right. I asked you to keep your hand In First Peter three, go back to First Peter three. But this time down to verse seven. So Peter began by talking about, don't abandon your faith as a Christian spouse continue to live it out. But then in First Peter three, seven, he turns to husbands. And he says in verse seven husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, 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. Now when Paul on Peter says here, in the same way be consider it. Some translations render this way which is more accurate according to knowledge. In other words, live with your wife, according to how well you know her. In other words, you will feed care for her, as Paul says, because you have invested time in getting to know her more and more. And when he says here she is the weaker vessel, he is not implying she is inferior embryogenesis both are created in the image of God. He's probably just referencing generally, physically, men are stronger, which is a caution to men in marriage to not abuse that advantage. They have a physical strength and presence to it in a godly way, intimidate or to get their will carried out not God's will. Because any immediately says they're co heirs in Christ. So there you have the biblical understanding. There can be a distinction and difference in roles and expectations. That does not imply an inferiority or superiority one over the other. So we've seen the first two pegs in this passage. But now we come back to the last two verses in Ephesians chapter five. And there's exhortation to both husbands and wives. And in particular, look at verse 33. The last verse, however, each of you must also love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. So he summarizes which Paul often does kind of say, just in case, you sort of missed what I'm saying, here's the responsibilities you have noticed the husband is to love his wife, as we've said, a decision of the will to be committed to Christ, in loving your wife, and setting a godly example. And then he repeats this thought of submission, but he uses an interesting word, wives must be respect her husband. Now if you look at Ephesians 5:21, most of our translations say submit

to one another out of reverence for Christ. The word reverence is the exact same word rendered respect in verse 33. So really, you should read that the wife must reverence her husband. Now, this does not mean 100% agreement on every issue, but in other words, to recognize the godly position that God has put a Christian man in. And you can all of a sudden start to see how both these responsibilities fall on each one differently. Because Paul says they're each of you. So we're back to what does God expect from me in this marriage in this relationship, not not what do I expect for the other person? Or what is God expect from them, they really need to read this. But But putting yourself under the microscope. And you can start to see, wow, if if we're being faithful to God's words as husbands, would this also encourage and facilitate our wife responding and like to the responsibility she has? And wouldn't it work the other way as well? Absolutely. But then, as we've seen throughout these exhortations, everything is tied to as Christ has done. And so we look at this in the bigger, broader picture. This passage is not just about how to improve your marriage, or potential for marriage, but it's about Christ's relationship to his church, because you get to verse 32. And Paul says, this is a profound mystery. But he doesn't want you to think he's talking about marriage or how to make a Marriage work. He's saying, but I'm talking about Christ and the church. And what that says to us is, yes, marriage is to be a mirror reflection of Christ's relationship to his church. But it's also a reminder that you cannot have a Christian marriage without knowing Christ. That there's no way as husbands you can love your wife like Christ loved the church if you don't know Christ. And there's no way as a wife that you can willingly put yourself under the loving headship and care of a husband if you don't know Christ. If Christ is not changing your heart, and working in your life John Newton is often associated with the him Amazing Grace which he did pen, but he became a pastor later in life after becoming a or after being a slave crater on a ship. But he wrote a letter to a couple that had just gotten married in his church, and he was congratulating them. But in the letter, he wished them this. He said, knowing that you have just gotten married. He says, I hope that you are blessed in every respect. I hope that you experience much temporal comfort. I hope your marriage promotes your spiritual progress. And I hope it enlarges your sphere of influence and usefulness in the world and in the church. Doesn't that make what should be our prayer, no matter what station you are in, in life, that in your marriage that yes, it would promote your spiritual growth, that it would enhance your usefulness in the world and the church. But if you're single, the same prayer should hope turn In other words, this passage should not leave you discouraged because you don't have this pressure remind you of what you have in Jesus Christ. Because that sets the tone for all that we've just looked at. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you that your word is always meant to instruct and encourage us. So I ask that we would pray for one another marriages that they for both people would honor these teachings that you would remind us on those days when we are so acutely aware of our own sinfulness, that it is by your grace that we can attain these daily responsibilities in Christ. Lord, we pray for all of us. That whatever point

we are in our lives, we would take great comfort How Christ has loved the church and how marriage is to be a picture of your relationship to us as your church and as your children. We pray in our Lord's name, amen.