

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Grace Unleashed

PART

23

TITLE

Submitting Out Of Reverence

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:22-33



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Good morning to you, Providence, hope you are well. If you have your Bible, I would encourage you to take them out and open to Ephesians chapter 5. Can we just praise God this morning for his goodness to us, real quick? Let's just do this together, okay? Come on, let's praise him, he is working. Incredible worship team, incredible weekend, we had some 600 here yesterday sending out, as you heard and saw the video, absolutely incredible day, engaging our city with the love of Christ in a practical way. On Saturday, man, my bracket was busted on Friday when UVA lost, so it started bad, but ended good. So we're just encouraged that you are here with us.

If you're new to Christianity or maybe you're exploring Christianity, we're so grateful that you've come. If you don't have a Bible, there is one underneath the seat there in front of you. You can take that. We'll be on page 978, so 978. If you're in one of the other venues or watching livestream, we just say welcome to you as well, thank you for joining us. We want to encourage you, if you can make it, we'd love to have you here and get plugged in with us.

So here's what we're walking through, Ephesians chapter 5, so Ephesians chapter 5. Now, this book, Ephesians, you think about Paul, there was a guy, his name was actually Saul, and then he was persecuting Christians and his life was radically changed by Christ, so much so that he even changed his name to Paul. Then he went from place to place planting churches. As he planted churches, he would then write letters back to them to instruct and encourage them in certain things. Many of them would have questions for him and that he would address, and other times he would just by the Spirit of God would write to them, and so this is what we have, which is a miracle in and of itself that we have this book called the Bible.

But Paul is in prison in Rome, he made his way to Rome, he's arrested, and he's writing this letter back to the people who live in Ephesus, which is modern-day Turkey. As they live there in this thriving city called Ephesus, the people that live there are the Ephesians, and so this is why he addresses, why we call it Ephesians. It's really interesting because in chapters 1, 2, and 3, we really built a firm foundation, like we were saying, of Christ in theology, and not a lot of things, "Hey, do this, do that", but just really what we believe, right? Then what we believe affects how then how we live.

This is how Paul writes a lot of his letters. He's telling you what God has done in Christ, that he sent his Son to live a life you and I could not live, die a death that you and I deserve, was buried, and then was raised from the dead to validate, he was the way, the truth, and the life, that no man comes to God the Father except through Christ. So he's establishing this incredible theological, if you would, foundation of all that God has done in Christ, all the spiritual rich blessings are in Christ.

Then he gets to 4, 5, and 6, so in light of that let's live like this. So he addressed our speech, how we speak to each other. He addressed our sexuality, our lust, our greed, our coveting, just everything. Paul just was unpacking all of these things over the past few weeks. Then we find ourselves, right? We find ourselves coming to this larger portion of the text that he will address specifically wives and husbands in the context of marriage, right? Now, I know in this room and those that are watching, there are marriages that are struggling, there's some marriages that have ended, there's some that are thriving, there's some that are desiring marriage, and maybe it hasn't happened, some have buried a spouse, that are listening this morning. Many maybe are anticipating that first marriage.

But in our culture it's gone so wild that the definition and the beauty of marriage is all over the place. So I want to encourage us this morning, I want to encourage us to lean in and to listen to the apostle Paul, as really guided by the Spirit of God as he writes this. I love this picture, right? In chapter 4 he says, before he's beginning to tell us to do all these things, he says, "I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling on your life." The word urge, it's a word, it's not that Paul is all up in your face pointing at you, it's a beautiful word that means he comes alongside you.

Imagine the apostle Paul coming alongside you, putting his arm around you, and saying, "This is how God desires us to live because of everything he's done for us." We don't live in such a way in hopes that he will accept us. He takes us in our brokenness, right? Extends grace and mercy, redeems, and then says, "Now this is how I want my children to live." So Paul as he's urging, the urging is a sense of coming alongside us. So imagine this morning even Paul walking with us side by side, instructing us in his word. So with that said, let me read and let me pray, and we'll read this word.

Father God, thank you for today, thank you for this word that you have preserved, thank you for all that have come today. We sit under this word, we humble ourselves. You tell us in Isaiah 66, this is the one to whom you will look, those who are humble in heart and contrite and tremble at your word. So, God, there is a trembling in one sense that we even have your word, but now that we sit under your word. So, God, would you teach us this morning, by the power of your Spirit. Help all those things that are so distracting to be removed, and help us to lock in. So as we read it, may it read us, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Verse 22, let's read this word, it says, "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, 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, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. And in the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, 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, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound and I'm 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." This is the word of God

I remember specifically growing up, and as I grew up and watching my dad build certain things for me, I had a desire to want to be able to build or assemble and put things together. So with three young girls, we have a son and three daughters, I remember this particular Christmas where they were at that age of wanting to just constantly somewhat play together and build together. So I had this vision of creating and building a kitchen type sink with a little oven and all, and I stored it at their grandparents house, and got them down on that particular night of Christmas Even, ran over late and picked it up and brought it in the house probably 10:30, 11:00. It was a huge, I mean, we could have started a soup kitchen ministry, this thing was so big, right?

I remember specifically, as I brought it in and I noticed the picture on the box of this particular kitchen, that I thought to myself, "For certain I could put this together without reading any of the instructions." Right? So I take all the pieces out, I had to take all the pieces out and get assembled on the floor. I began to put it together without reading any of the directions at all, right? After about two and a half hours it had not been put together yet. I remember, it's like 1:30 in the morning and I'm like, "Well, maybe I should just read the instructions." Right? So I pulled them out, I read them, they work, it's amazing. I got this kitchen put together, right? I get this kitchen put together. The kids played with it, it was amazing.

But yeah, I begin to think about marriage and how we come to it, and how much we see culture, we see the perspective of marriage out there, be it in bookstores or magazines where it's "10 Secrets To This Successful Marriage", or we watch it and we're engulfed The Bachelor as if that's the learning ground for marriage, right? That's not real, right? You don't have a car pull up with 25 ladies get out and you date them all at the same time, and then they give you a big ring. That's not real. That's a TV show, okay? Then it just explodes and it's chaos. Yet, we read culture, right? We see culture. The thing is, God is saying, "Please, just look inside, not the box, but the book. I've created it. I authored it. I'm the author of this incredible institution, and I've got things that I've laid out for you." So I want to show you three truths really quick this morning, that God has for marriage.

The first is this, is that he desires for the Spirit of Jesus to guide in marriage. He desires for the Spirit of Jesus to guide in marriage. I'm going to reach back just a little bit from last week, because I think what Paul is doing, again, if he's with us, he's here, he's going to connect verses 15 to 21 before he gets to 22. There's a reason 22 follows 21 and the flow of it, right? Because I think there's no greater time, in a sense, to be able to address and look at marriage, because what he says, he says, "Look carefully how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time."

We learned last week that life right now, as we approach it and as we see it, as we view it, that it's much more like it's the last two minutes of the game than the first two minutes of the game. First two minutes of the game, a few turnovers, you kind of just go along with it. But the last two minutes, there's an urgency, there's a seriousness that we approach the game and not try to turn it over. There's more energy put into that, right? I think this is what he's saying, what he says to make the best use of the time. We learn the word there, time, and address it, it wasn't like chronological time, it was more of this opportune time, this moment, this season.

I remember playing, I had the opportunity to play basketball in college, and we would be downstairs in the locker room getting ready for the game, and we would all be kind of listening to some music, and then we'd try to get hype and get all kind of pumped up for the game, and so we would kind of get in a circle, kind of lock arms, and we would start kind of swaying back and forth a little bit. Then one of the guys on the team would just start yelling out, he's like, "What time is it?" No one said, "It's 7:18." They didn't say that. No, we would get down, right? And we'd be getting ready for this, seize this moment, this opportune moment. They would be moving back and forth and we'd start jumping, and it would be, "What time is it?" And one of the other of us say, "It's game time." Another guy about a minute later would go, "What time is it?" "It's 7:19. You just asked me." No, that's not the idea, right? "It's game time!" Right? It's that opportune moment.

This is what Paul's saying, it's the opportune moment. Nowhere is it maybe even greater than to understand what marriage is in our day and time, when the enemy is having a heyday with it and there's struggles. We don't need another 5 or 10 practical steps per se from a magazine. We need internal power of God working. This is what Paul does, he says, this is why he says, "Listen, we need to be filled with the Spirit of God." We unpacked that, we looked at that, and I believe verses 18, 19, 20 and 21, those four verses in your Bible, in the Greek, now when I say Greek what I mean by that is, this New Testament was originally written in Greek, it's been translated into English, praise God, so we could read it and hear it and understand it, but in the original Greek those four verses are all one sentence that's building up to 22 to 33, right?

So what does he say? He says to be filled with the Spirit. It's a present tense verb, that you're continuing to press in and follow God, being filled with the Spirit. It's not a past experience, not a future experience, it's a daily experience with God where you seek his word, you pray, and you're asking, you're confessing sin on a daily basis, trying to just stay close to God, walk with God, love God. So the Spirit of Christ, this Holy Spirit of God, a third person of the Trinity, is the one that we learn in chapter 4, way back, that has sealed us and redeemed us in a sense. So if Jesus was with us physically, which would be amazing, right? The only problem is when we go home who'd he go home with, and what car would he ride home with? This is in a sense what Jesus is saying in the gospel of John, is that it's better for me to go so that I could send my Spirit to come and be with you wherever you go. So there's a fullness of that, this relationship called marriage.

I believe what Paul is doing is that he's setting up the playbook for marriage, he's setting up this starting point, in a sense, for marriage, to, watch this, to really experience and express all that God desires from marriage. I think that's why he's saying, be filled with the Spirit, listen, yes, singing, being grateful, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. So let me explain to you what the Spirit's going to do. The Holy Spirit is going to guide us, before into this perfect marriage, he's going to guide us to Jesus to gaze at Jesus. So there's a submitting to one another that's going to come first and foremost because of our reverence for Christ, the text says that in 21, right? This gospel, this good news of Jesus, of what he's done.

The Spirit of God, he's not a prosecuting attorney, he's an advocate, John 15 says. He's an advocate that's for you in these efforts. Yes, he does bring conviction of sin, and yes he does bring encouragement in righteousness when we do things that God wants us to do. But he's an advocate that as we're filled with him we're understanding then how marriage works. I love John 16, it's on the screen here, and verse 30. This is Jesus, he's talking to his disciples and he says this, now think about this, let this land on you, "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he [Holy Spirit] will guide you into all of the truth. He [the Holy Spirit] will not speak on his own. He [the Holy Spirit] will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me."

So it's, the Holy Spirit will glorify me, Jesus, because it is from Jesus that he, the Holy Spirit, will receive what he will make known to you. So think about this, right? There's the Son of God, resurrected in all power and glory, sending his Spirit, and his Spirit's role is not to just do his own thing. No, he's listening to Jesus, and Jesus is instructing and giving. And the Spirit of God that lives in you, if you've come to a point where you've trusted Christ, where you've realized that Christ has come, lived a life you and I cannot live, died the death that you and I deserve, was buried and rose from the dead, and you've placed your faith in him for forgiveness of sins, right? This is the gospel. When that happens, he's not going to make much of himself or you, he's going to make much of Jesus. This is his role.

So in marriage as we submit to Christ first and foremost, then we get ready to unpack 22 to 33. I love when I meet with couples, and sometimes it's pre-marriage counseling, sometimes it's marriage counseling, and I always write this on the board. I'll draw a triangle and I'll put Jesus at the top and I'll put the husband and wife at the bottom, and this is what it kind of looks like, and I tell them there's always a wider gap at the bottom than at the top, there's always a wider gap at the bottom. If you are trying to love each other in your own strength and your own ways, and the eyes are just focused on each other, and you're not focused on Christ. But if you're focused individually on Christ and you're loving him, you're running hard after him, then what's going to happen is, Christ draws you not only closer to him but closer to one another. And the capacity to love each other and to be loved is so much greater when Christ is at the center.

I love thinking about it, a good friend of mine recently did this illustration and sent it to me, I loved what it shows. I'm going to do it for you. I know some of you saw the water up here in the bucket, you thought we were doing a baptism this morning, right? So we're not going to be sprinkling anybody. But think about this for a moment. These are just ping pong balls. Just think if each one of these represent maybe slander, like you cutting each other down in the relationship, maybe it represents envy or jealousy or lust or pride, just the whole list of crazy stuff that brings tension, right? You've experienced that tension in the marriage, right? It gets in your heart. When you're trusting Christ and you're walking with Christ and you're loving Christ and you're yielding to Christ and you're growing in your love toward Christ, it's like this water comes and it's like the Holy Spirit as it begins to fill your heart and fill your life up. As it begins and continues to just fill, what's going to happen is that stuff rises up and out, right? It rises up and out.

As the Spirit continues, as you continue to love Christ, not just on Sunday, but all throughout the week, and you continue, it's going to get out of you and on top. As the Spirit continues and these just continue to move out and move aside, and they're still balancing on top, they're trying to get back down in there, right? They're trying to get back in there. Some of those sins don't want to leave you. But they can't get deep in your heart, right?

So as you're walking with Christ, listen, be filled up in order to get rid of the old. It's always knocking at the door, especially in marriage. You want to see it all shine brightly. Get married, put two sinners under the same roof, and try to get along. It's going to be messy, apart from Christ. So way of application, listen, let's yield to the Holy Spirit to guide us to Jesus in marriage.

Now, second is this, is that God designs, God designs roles to bring good to marriage. Now, right off the bat, we don't have time to unpack everything that's here, right? But I want to show a few things. First of all, there's 19 words for the wife and 150 for the husbands. So, sisters in the house, this is where you say "Amen", right? Because the husbands need a little bit more work, is what I think he's trying to say. But I want you to get this picture, Romans 8, he says, "If I've not given my Son, will I not also give you everything that you need? All good things." So he's not going to hold out on us in a sense by walking through these things with us.

Let me say this, listen to this statement, because there's such confusion in our culture when it comes to wives submitting to your husbands, husbands are head of the wife, and these things, right? Listen, Christianity, let me say this real quick, Christianity is one of the most amazing religions in the world that honors women. Most religions in the world suppress women. This is not what Christianity does. I want to unpack it for you. Because if you just read it out of context, you're like, "Man, what's up with that?" But if you read it in context, it is absolutely amazing what happens.

So I want you to think about this, wives and husbands, listen to this statement, "Both male and female are equal and bear the image of God and are in equal in standing before God." Ephesians presents men and women in an ordered equality in which there is no superiority or inferiority, simply differing roles. So wives, aspire to these things. Husbands, aspire to these roles that we unpack here.

So wives, it says, "Submit to your husbands as to the Lord." So the trinity is so key to understand this. You need to look at Jesus in a sense and his submission to the father for strength to submit to your husbands. Philippians 2 says it like this, "Who being in very nature God did not consider ..." here's the language, "equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross."

So to look at how do we submit, we look to the Son, we look to the Trinity, and how the Son of God, equal with God, yet submitted to the Father's will, "Not my will, but your will." What Scripture's stating, now watch this, sisters in the house, listen, Scripture's stating that happy submission is the posture to recognize and honor the husband's great responsibility to lead by love. So the gospel, right? This good news of Christ, this is what it does, it frees a wife to respect, to receive, and to rejoice in strength and leadership from a worthy husband, in ways that bring good to the marriage. All these roles that God has designed, it brings good. So the gospel frees a wife. This is not bondage, this is freedom. It frees a wife to respect and receive and rejoice, right?

Now watch this, stay with me now, there are sensations of unbounded independence that are not true freedom. Let me say it again, there are sensations of unbounded independence that are not true freedom. What I mean by that, if you have two sisters jumping out of an airplane at 10,000 feet and one is restricted by a parachute and one is not bound by a parachute, it feels as if there's more freedom in that experience. It actually leads to calamity. So these roles that God has laid out for husbands and wives, there's freedom in it. He's not trying to bound you. No, he's trying to bless you.

I remember specifically, two to three years into our marriage, Julie has so much wisdom in our marriage, she's like, "Man, the first year we tried to change each other, the second year we realized we couldn't, and the third year we hit some strides." All right? I just remember that third year, she reflecting back, she's like, "I never realized ..." and this is what came out of her mouth, she goes, "I never realized how freeing submission was." That seems like it contradicts itself. At first there was some serious frustrations, it wasn't a lot of freedom, there was a lot of frustrations. But as God began to work and we sought mentors to walk with us and encourage us and help us.

I remember specifically where it wasn't a time of feeling that freedom, when we first started dating, and I had no idea what I was doing. One day she was just longing, longing for me to initiate, longing for me to just lead in some way. I'm a simple guy from a simple place. So deep conversations, I could have them, but I didn't like to necessarily have a lot of them. Dated a few girls in college, but no deep conversations. So as we were just hanging out together, she comes to me and she's like, "Listen, we need to have a DTR." I'm like, "I don't even know what that means." So she's like, "We need to define the relationship." I'm like, "Oh, okay, well, I mean, I like hanging out. You want me to say something else?" So as we walk through this, and it was a little rocky and bumpy there, we actually took some time off for about a year in our dating. Then as God had a man in my life to mentor and kind of walk me through how to really pursue where she could feel respected and receive.

I remember specifically, I had called her up one day and I said, "I think, in the Spirit of God, I've been pursuing God, the Lord's working and leading my life, I want to pursue you with intentionality of dating, possibly courting, and maybe marriage." She's like, "What?" She's like, "Because I don't think there's a future for you and I." I said, "Well, would you just let me talk to you and let me just share some things?" So we set up a time, I came over, and as I walked in I noticed a legal pad laid out, right? On this legal pad, I was thinking, "Is she going to take notes?" It looked like she had some notes. I came to find out there was about three or four pages of all the reasons why she could not marry me. Right?

I was like, "Oh goodness, this may not go well." I said, "I tell you what ..." I didn't read it, I didn't look at it, I said, "Just let me go first, let me initiate, and let me walk through some stuff with you. So God in his kindness, as I began to walk through these things, I started addressing every single thing that she had written down of why she couldn't marry me. Not only addressing everything, but doing it in the very order that she had laid out on her legal pad. Right? As her saw her start to kind of melt a little bit, she turned the legal pad over. And God did a great work. It's amazing to be able to initiate with her and to be able to start this conversation, right?"

So wives, be able to receive, the gospel frees you to receive these things as you're in a healthy place with God. Husbands, verses 25 to 27, there's so much here, it unpacks of how you're to love even as we love ourselves, and yet, 25 to 27 it's monumental. I actually have Ephesians 5:25-27 actually engraved on the inside of my wedding band for the last 20 years, 6 months and 18 days, as a reminder of the call that God has on my life as a husband. This is the call, right? The weight falls on the husband to love your wives. Notice what he says in the text, he doesn't just say, "Love your wives", but, "Love your wives as Christ loved the church." It doesn't just say to love your wives as Christ loved the church. He told you how he loved. He told you how he loved. He says, "And he gave himself up for her."

So listen, really quick, many in our culture believe, I even had this mindset one time, of just hearing a little about some mission, hearing a little about husbands and head and all this stuff, and some will even allude to, "Hey, Genesis, the woman gave the man the fruit, led him into sin. Then there needs to be some type of submission and stuff to that." Listen, all of that, out of context is not what it means. Because I'm convinced, after reading and studying the Scriptures, that Genesis 3 verse 6, notice what it says as it's on the screen, "She also gave some ..." she's been tempted by the enemy, "to her husband ..." notice these four words, "who was with her, and he ate it." See, I'm convinced that the first sin was the husband's passivity to not step in and smash the serpent's head and crush it for trying to mislead his wife. And praise be to God, although that Adam didn't do it, there was another Adam that came, who did crush the enemy's head on a cross.

So listen, husbands look to Christ, look to Christ. Notice the weight, right? He gave his life. So the gospel, husbands, reverses everything, the curses messes everything up with relationships, and yet the gospel reverses it and empowers husbands and empowers husbands to pursue and to provide and to protect wives in ways that bring good to marriages. The gospel empowers husbands to pursue with intentionality their wives, to study them, to learn them, to provide, not just provide financially, but to provide an atmosphere of grace and mercy, to provide an atmosphere of love and kindness, to provide an atmosphere of pursuing Christ, and to protect, to protect not just physically, but to protect emotionally and spiritually, to be a warrior on your knees pleading to God for your wife and family.

Yes, it is a protection physically as well. You're not going to be in bed at 2 AM and here something rumbling in the garage and roll over and ask your wife to go check on that. Right? Don't do that. It would be foolish. No, we want to be able to take the honor and the joy to be able to protect even in that way. Men are all about some greatness, are they not? Jesus says in Matthew 23, "The greatest among you will be your servant." So listen, the way of application to wives, respect and follow your husbands. Husbands love and pursue your wives, love and pursue your wives. Listen, God, yes, he does desire for us to be led by his Spirit, and yes, he designs these roles. But third and last is this, is that he displays, God displays his glory and gospel through marriage.

Recently I was in the store and checking out, and I saw this Time Magazine, and it had these two wedding bands interlocked with each other, and it had this title on the top of it as it comes up, “The Science of Marriage”. So I was curious. I knew I was going to be preaching on this text soon, and teaching. So I just said, “I wonder what culture thinks about these things.” Because there wasn’t much about Ephesians in this particular article. But as I looked at these 14 chapters, chapter 1 said this, “It’s all about attraction”. And my heart just sank. No, listen, there’s something to attraction, yes, I saw Jules, noticed how beautiful she was, then I saw her heart, and her heart and her love for Christ, and how much beautiful that was. But Paul would say, “Oh listen, no, Time Magazine, let’s start with, it’s not about all attraction, it’s all about God, it’s all about his glory, it’s all about the gospel.” Right?

So what he’s done, think about Paul, this is just so powerful how he unfolds for us even the purpose for marriage, even the reality of why it even exists, right? So what he says, imagine he’s in a cell writing to the Ephesians, so he doesn’t have Ephesians, he’s writing Ephesians, okay? So he’s not doing his quiet time in the prison with Ephesians. He’s in the cell reading the Old Testament, doing his quiet time in prison, writing Ephesians. So he reflects back on Genesis 1, 2 and 3 with specificity, and he inserts, in verse 31, right? As the Spirit leads him, “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two become one flesh.” Now, this is a direct quote from Genesis. So then he does what? He unfolds what seems mysterious between God and Israel in this marriage-like relationship, what seems mysterious and this God calling this marriage this incredible one union, the reason behind it is revealed. In verse 32 he says, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

So listen to me, Providence, this morning, at the 11 o’clock hour, right? Marriage is this metaphor, this image, this picture that stands for something more than just a man and woman becoming one flesh. It stands for the relationship between Christ and the church. That’s the deepest meaning of marriage. It’s a shadow on earth of reality in heaven. The Bible started with a wedding and it’s going to end with a wedding. The marriages all throughout history are ultimately to point to Christ and the church, how Christ loves and how the church follows. One author says it like this, “It’s meant to be a living drama of how Christ and the church relate to each other.”

So listen, Providence, if the weight of God’s glory is at stake and the witness of God’s power to spread to the nations, to reach some 3 billion people who’ve never heard of Jesus, is at stake in your marriage, then listen, we’ll think twice before those separation papers are signed, we’ll think twice before having an affair, we’ll think twice clicking on that site, we’ll think twice about the slander and the tearing down of spouse with co-workers. Right? It’ll reverse every category you have. Those things have happened. Listen, there’s more grace in God than sin in us, and so there’s still hope, even if we’ve gone through these hard waters of divorce, that God can restore and do miraculous things.

But we as a church and as a people want to hold up, when people ask us, “What is your position on divorce?” We always start with, “Well, let me tell you what we think about marriage first, and how God laid it out.” See, our culture will shout, “Your gladness is primary in marriage.” And God’s will say, “No, his glory and his gospel is primary.”

Robertson McQuilkin, who was the president of Columbia Bible College for many years, from the 60s up into the early 90s, wrote this letter as his wife was diagnosed early on with Alzheimer’s disease and it was rapidly taking her life. He still had some years to go before retirement, and many colleagues were saying, “Man, could you set her up and take care of her in some type of home? You’ve got a still future in front of you. You need to write, and your voice of influence, and you’re an influential leader.”

This is what he says in his letter of resignation from this institute, he says, “I love Muriel, she’s a delight to me. Her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of that wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I don’t have to care for her, I get to care for her. It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person.”

One theologian reflecting on this life of Robertson says, “This is how Christ’s love for the church is our model, he laid his life down and so should we. When it comes to marriage, Robertson McQuilkin showed what true love was, reflected God’s glory and God’s gospel as it was on full display.

So this morning, Providence, listen, let’s let marriage move you and I to live for God’s glory and his gospel. Let’s pray together. Father, thank you for today and this text. Thank you for preserving it, God. Lord, as I started our time, I know so many have possibly buried a spouse or have lost a spouse, or have experienced real heartache in relationships. So God, I pray for a special work of your grace in their hearts and their life. Would you refresh their mind and their hearts around the concept of marriage? Maybe not have the opportunity to even understand the roles that were designed. So would you just do a work of grace in their hearts, God?

I pray also for those that are in the midst of the struggle, that are still together, that you would do a great work in their hearts, God, to show them the weight of what is at stake, the sweetness that could be experienced, the fullness of what could be expressed, that, God, you would refresh and rekindle a new love first and foremost for you and then for one another. And, God, for those that are thriving in their marriage, would you continue to whisper just shouts of encouragement to continue steadfast, to excel still more in these efforts. Thank you, God, that although all have failed and fallen short of the glory of you, that you have come and you have crushed the enemy on the cross, through your death, burial, resurrection. So our eyes go first and foremost to the hope that we have in him and the peace that he brings. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.



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