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STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES BY TRAINING MEN  
AT BETHEL EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH IN  
FAIRMONT, MINNESOTA, USING A BIBLICAL  
COUNSELING FRAMEWORK

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Presented to  
the Faculty of  
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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Kirk Robert Jostad  
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Kirk Robert Jostad

Read and Approved by:

Faculty Supervisor: Stuart W. Scott

Second Reader: Joseph C. Harrod

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For the glory of God

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICC	International Critical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary



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## PREFACE

The DMin program at SBTS has been enriching, rewarding, as well as challenging. I am thankful for the robust educational endeavor at SBTS. Through persistent encouragement from my family (especially, Rochelle), friends, and the faculty at SBTS, I have been given the privilege to pursue Christ in this way. I pray that God will use these efforts for his glory, so that Jesus Christ would be exalted among all the nations.

Kirk Robert Jostad

East Chain, Minnesota

December 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This project addressed a need within every church: strengthening marriages. Specifically, the training was given to husbands at Bethel Evangelical Free Church in Fairmont, Minnesota, so they could increase their knowledge and apply biblical commands and principles in their marriages to the glory of God. The groundwork for the training was rooted in the Bible, using biblical counseling methods.

#### **Context**

Bethel Evangelical Free Church (BEFC) in Fairmont, Minnesota, has existed since 1899 and has a long history of representing Christ in Martin County. BEFC is the largest evangelical church in the county. BEFC averages more than four hundred in attendance on Sunday morning and provides Sunday School for adults and children.<sup>1</sup>

The need to strengthen marriages exists within any human environment. God has chosen to use marriage as a representation of Christ's relationship with the church (Eph 5:32). Because married couples struggle with sin and live in a fallen world, there will always be a need. In the context of BEFC, there are no ministries that specifically focus on strengthening marriages. There are ministries to children, youth, men, and women but not on marriages. This leaves a knowledge gap on what marriage is and what to do when marriage gets difficult. There are no small groups for marriage, and the church does not have a biblical counseling ministry to care for married couples.

Common problems in marriage at BEFC include anger, anxiety, infidelity (i.e.,

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<sup>1</sup> In 2020, BEFC felt the impact of COVID-19. With gathering restrictions, the in-person services averaged 150 people on Sunday, and the Sunday school classes were strictly online.

pornography usage, physical and emotional affairs), bitterness, fear, and selfishness, while not taking steps to address heart issues. The greatest problem is that people are not living to please God and give him glory. This causes marriages at BEFC to end in divorce. The husband and wife blame each other; they think that if they married someone else, their lives would be so much better. Married couples are so influenced by the world and its way of dealing with problems that they cannot remember how to deal with conflict biblically. This project aimed to strengthen marriages through God's Word.

Since 2015, there have been no marriage retreats and only one marriage seminar. Personally, this lack of resources has been difficult because our previous church had biblical counseling seminars, annual marriage retreats, and small groups that focused on marriage, along with other resources to help strengthen marriages. Our senior pastor at BEFC saw this need and preached a four-part series on marriage. This series was a good step in the right direction; however, ongoing care and further training needed to happen.

BEFC possesses several solid, Christ-centered marriages. We need to incorporate the knowledge and experience from these couples to pass it on to the next generation and provide support for those in need. This training gave the opportunity to the strong couples to hone their own relationships and connect them with other new or struggling married couples.

People need to be trained in understanding biblical counseling principles such as the Heat-Thorns-Cross-Fruit model.<sup>2</sup> No biblical counselors are accessible within a ninety-mile radius of the church. One can find Christian counselors who are integrationists about fifty miles away. The training from this project provided the foundation for the couples to address issues in their marriages using biblical counseling principles, so that they deal with their problems in a God-glorifying way.

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change*, 2nd ed. (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008), 90.

The biggest weakness in our ministry context is that people want to appear on the outside that “everything is ok.” This facade is extremely detrimental to the cause of Christ. Jesus wants broken people to recognize they are weak and rely on his strength (2 Cor 12:9). It is difficult to get into a deeper conversation with the average member on Sunday morning. They would rather talk about sports, the weather, or current events. The members are not open with one another, which can make it hard to provide soul care. In addition, our Midwestern context is non-confrontational, which means that it is challenging for people to rebuke or admonish in a loving way because people would rather avoid the situation altogether.

### **Rationale**

The weakness of downplaying one’s own sin, and pretending that everything is ok, finds its roots in pride. This pride might be known or unknown at the time. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (Jas 4:6)<sup>3</sup>; therefore, the objective was to cultivate humility within the men of BEFC.

If the members in the church act as if everything is fine, then they will not ask for help until it is too late. This will have implications for both the marriage and the family (if the couple has children, whether young or old). The emotional strain that conflict produces can affect every area of their lives. Also, because marriage is a testimony of Christ’s relationship to the church, the witness for the cause of Christ is hindered. If marriages are weak, which means that there are unaddressed sinful issues of commission or omission, it could give the devil an opportunity to destroy the marriage.

If the members appear to be living a godly walk yet harbor bitterness, jealousy, and anger in their hearts, then their relationships will eventually deteriorate. The family knows what is going on at home, so, if the parents act one way in public but are another

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

way in private, this models hypocrisy to their children. In other words, the children will be taught the opposite lesson that they should have learned from their parents about marriage and relationships. The children will not want that “Christian” marriage, so they could grow up never getting married—only having boyfriends/girlfriends. The husband needs to take the lead in modeling what Christlike love is within the home.

This training of husbands materialized so that the body of Christ is built up in love, starting with marriages. The men should initiate forgiveness and reconciliation. If there are no sins that need to be addressed, then he can improve ways of loving his wife, sacrificing for her, and encouraging her in her walk with Christ. If he has been faithful to deal with sin, and lead his wife well, then he can start to teach others to do the same. The husband can become involved in marriage (biblical) counseling and be a part of any future seminars. He could be available to other younger Christian men who are needing wisdom and biblical advice to navigate marriage. “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to strengthen marriages within the membership of Bethel Evangelical Free Church in Fairmont, Minnesota, specifically addressing husbands and their role in a God-honoring marriage using a biblical counseling framework.

### **Goals**

This project required three goals to successfully complete its purpose. The husbands at BEFC built stronger marriages by going through the seminar, while gaining knowledge about a God-honoring marriage.

1. The first goal of this project was to assess men’s understanding of a God-honoring marriage.

2. The second goal of this project was to develop an eight-session curriculum for a weekend seminar that equipped men to love, lead, and serve their wives. The curriculum covered biblical foundations for marriage, such as God's original design, servant-leadership, and sacrificial love. The curriculum also encompassed typical issues that arise in marriage and how to resolve them.
3. The third goal of this project was to increase men's knowledge of a God-honoring marriage.

In order to fulfill the required completion of these three goals, a specific research methodology was carefully laid out with the following details in the next section.

### **Research Methodology**

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of these three goals.<sup>4</sup> The first goal of this project was to assess men's understanding of a God-honoring marriage. This goal was measured by administering a Biblical Foundation of Marriage Survey (BFMS) to at least twelve married men.<sup>5</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when twelve men completed the BFMS and the data was examined to determine the overall knowledge base of biblical marriages.

The second goal of this project was to develop an eight-session curriculum for a weekend seminar that equipped men to love, lead, and serve their wives. The curriculum covered biblical foundations for marriage, such as God's original design, servant-leadership, and sacrificial love. The curriculum also addressed typical issues that arise in marriage and how to resolve them. This goal was measured by an expert panel that employed a rubric to evaluate the overall biblical accuracy, applicability, and teaching methodology of the curriculum.<sup>6</sup> This goal was considered successfully met

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<sup>4</sup> All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix 2.



when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. The material needed to be revised if it did not pass the 90 percent benchmark on the first assessment.

The third goal of this project was to increase men's knowledge of a God-honoring marriage. The BFMS was administered after the weekend seminar and was compared with the pre-seminar results. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test samples showed a statistically positive difference between the pre-seminar survey and post-seminar survey results.

### **Definitions and Delimitations**

The following definition of a key term will be used in the ministry project:

*Biblical counseling.* This term describes one person actively using God's Word (biblical counselor) to help someone else (counselee) through their difficulties in life, while displaying the sufficiency of the Bible and encouraging the person to deepen his relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Two delimitations applied to this project. The first delimitation consisted of the number of sessions and time allowed for the project. The seminar had eight sessions during the course of the seminar. Second, the participants were comprised of only husbands at BEFC. The curriculum was tailored to the husband's experience, and the goal was to increase the knowledge of a husband.

### **Conclusion**

This project sought to build up the church of Christ by strengthening marriages. The focus dealt primarily with husbands, increasing their knowledge of a God-honoring marriage. The curriculum used for the weekend seminar was first and foremost

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<sup>7</sup> Robert D. Jones, "What Is Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling?," in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, by Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 20.

rooted in Scripture while also using biblical counseling principles.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR A HUSBAND'S SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

#### **Introduction**

Husbands are commanded to live as servant-leaders in marriage by displaying humility, gentleness, and sacrificial love. This chapter intends to expound on the biblical basis for this servant-leadership with examples found in the Old Testament and the New Testament, culminating with the all-perfect example of servant-leadership exhibited in Jesus Christ. In the beginning, Adam was instructed to be a servant-leader. This command can be seen in Genesis 2.

#### **Old Testament Depiction of Servant-Leadership**

Before God created Eve, the Lord charged Adam “to work” and “to keep” the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). Another translation of the word “to work” is “to serve.”<sup>1</sup> Adam’s stewardship consisted of serving the living creatures that were under his care. This service was not a one-time event but rather an ongoing action by Adam “to keep” or preserve the garden. The act of preserving the garden was not burdensome for Adam. The curse on Adam, found in Genesis 3, entailed Adam needing to work by the sweat of his brow, this implies that he did not have to work in this way before sin entered the world. Adam enjoyed success in what he did because God blessed his work, and Adam joyfully carried out the business of caring for all that God had put under his authority, namely all created beings on the earth.

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<sup>1</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 110.

## **An Exposition of Genesis 2**

Genesis 2:15 states, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” Adam was put in service of all the living creatures on earth; however, he was placed in a position of dominion (Gen 1:26, 28). So, Adam had a role as servant-leader before Eve was created. Then, God made Eve as a helper for him (Gen 2:18). This enhanced the command to be a servant-leader because now Adam had another human being under his care. As a husband, Adam was “one flesh” (Gen 2:24; Mark 10:8) with Eve, and he was not tainted by sin.

Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. sums up the “one flesh” relationship: “It is the profound fusion of two lives into one, shared life together, by the mutual consent and covenant of marriage. It is the complete and permanent giving over of oneself into a new circle of shared existence with one’s partner.”<sup>2</sup> The one flesh reality can be seen within the relationship of Christ and the church. Since Christ is the head and the church is the body, the two are part of the same flesh; in essence, the two are one. It is a mystery, yet the one flesh reality is significant in its unity and oneness. The husband ought to love his wife as his own body, which is also indicated from the one flesh representation.

Adam’s servant-leadership would not have been a burden for Eve. His love would have been without sin, and Adam also would have had a close communion with God. Adam’s servant-leadership was given by God for the purpose of glorifying God and enjoying God. Paul references Adam’s leadership role in 1 Timothy 2:12-14. Because he was formed first and was not deceived (although complicit) in the act of disobedience against God, he had a certain authority. Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones say, “Not only does Paul draw attention to the fact that the man was created first, but he also points out that it is not the man who was made for the woman, but the woman for the man

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 101.

(1 Cor. 11:9; see Gen. 2:18, 20) and from the man (1 Cor. 11:8, 12; see Gen. 2:22).”<sup>3</sup>

They go on to say, “Moreover, the man was the one who received the divine command (Gen. 2:16-17), was presented with the woman (Gen. 2:22), and named the woman with a name derived from his own (Gen. 2:23; see 3:20), which also implies his authority.”<sup>4</sup>

The reality that Adam was made first and was not deceived (in the same way) as Eve could be used by a husband in this modern day in order to manipulate his wife. The husband could accuse his wife of being gullible and demand servitude from his wife. This is not the biblical response or example of a servant-leader husband. Paul’s teaching on Adam being made first is fleshing out the God-created order of authority, which, if used in a God-glorifying way, is beautiful, good, and pleasing to God.

Even though Adam had authority, responsibility, and first-created rights, he would have been given those things for Eve’s good, modeling God’s generosity and love of all. Genesis 2:15, 20-25 show how God made Eve from Adam, as well as Adam’s first encounter with his bride. The writer of Genesis, presumably Moses, inserts commentary after the account. He gives a rendering about what happens when two people marry. This will be later referenced by Jesus when questioned about divorce and marriage. Genesis 2:24 states, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” There is a new family that is born once a husband marries his wife. The allegiance of the son to father/mother now turns to servant-leadership of his wife. He has a new responsibility to humble himself before God and his wife, to serve her in gentleness, depending solely on Christ and his provision for life, while emulating Christ by sacrificially loving her for as long as he or she lives. This life-long union between the husband and wife will set the stage for sanctification and growing

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<sup>3</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *Marriage and the Family: Biblical Essentials* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *Marriage and the Family*, 13.

into the likeness of Christ. Although the husband will sin and fail, he must continue to humble himself, ask for forgiveness from God and his wife, and lovingly serve her. Paul talks about how the husband will “be anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife” (1 Cor 7:33); the husband is now concerned about what his wife is concerned about.

In Genesis 2:25, we see that they were “both naked and not ashamed.” Their nakedness did not need to be covered up, and they were both walking in the truth with one another, without any embarrassment, humiliation, or need to hide. After sin entered the world (Gen 3), Adam and Eve realized their nakedness and felt the need to cover. Nakedness has been a form of shame, yet, within the marriage context, nakedness together is required to bring about obedience to the command for Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:22). Therefore, it is good and right for husband and wife to share this intimacy with nakedness, and a husband has the responsibility to have extra care in how he treats his wife in this vulnerable and profound intimacy within marriage. Depending on what has happened to the wife before they were married, the husband may need to exercise greater patience, gentleness, and love while being intimate with his wife, but neither of them should feel ashamed within marriage.

Adam could not fulfill the command that was later given (be fruitful and multiply) if God had not created Eve. Victor P. Hamilton says, “Everything thus far in Genesis that has been scrutinized by God has been given a positive assessment. Every situation has come through as either good or very good. For the first time we encounter something that is not good: man’s lack of a corresponding companion.”<sup>5</sup> Genesis 2:18 says, “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’” Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredrick said, “God creates the woman to help Adam, that is, to honor his vocation, to share his enjoyment, and to

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<sup>5</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 112.

respect the prohibition. The word *help* suggests that the man has governmental priority, but both sexes are mutually dependent on each other.”<sup>6</sup> The word *help* could also be misinterpreted to advocate that only the wife helps the husband in whatever he does, which means that the husband does not help the wife in whatever she does. The husband could be quick to point out to his wife that she must help him because that is what Eve was made to do. This line of demanding or demeaning from a husband does not align with the Christlike love that is found in Scripture.

Wayne Grudem makes the connection between the significance of the time lapse when God created Adam and Eve: “The fact that God first created Adam, then after a period of time created Eve (Gen 2:7, 18-23), suggests that God saw Adam as having a leadership role in his family.”<sup>7</sup> However, the relationship changed dramatically after their sin. God cursed Eve by saying, “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16). Hamilton gives a description of what this curse entails: “It means a desire to break the relationship of equality and turn it into a relationship of servitude and domination. The sinful husband will try to be a tyrant over his wife.”<sup>8</sup> However, John Skinner says, “The idea of tyrannous exercise of power does not lie in the vb.; but it means that the woman is wholly subject to the man, and so liable to the arbitrary treatment sanctioned by the marriage customs of the East.”<sup>9</sup> Although the dynamics of the relationship changed after the fall, the husband is still the servant-leader of the family and continues to bear his God-given authority.

Another indication that Adam was given a certain type of responsibility or

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 88.

<sup>7</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 461.

<sup>8</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 202.

<sup>9</sup> John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 83.

authority in the marriage relationship is found in the naming of Eve, his wife. In Genesis 2:23, Adam called her a “woman,” and, in Genesis 3:20, he gave her the name, “Eve.” Both of these names were given with significance attached to them. Adam used the word woman “for she was taken out of man” (Gen 2:23), and he bestowed the name Eve because “she was the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20). It is important to note that Eve did not name Adam for God gave the task of naming the living beings (Gen 2:19-20) by bringing them before Adam.

God’s design for humanity is seen in the order of creation. Both Adam and Eve were image bearers of God (Gen 1:27), yet both were not made at the same time. God had a process planned where Eve would be made out of a piece of Adam—“bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23)—which was a different process than how Adam was created. Adam was made from the ground, which was unique from how God created the animals (God used words to bring them into existence).

### **New Testament Depiction of Servant-Leadership**

Instead of Adam being a perfect husband, creation had to wait to see and experience Christ as the perfect husband. Christ perfectly leads and loves the church. Stuart Scott says, “God’s will for every Christian husband is to shepherd and love his wife the way Christ shepherds and loves the church (Eph 5:23-33). In fact, Christian men are called to follow Christ in all their ways.”<sup>10</sup> Mark 10:45 says, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The way of discipleship is through the path of service. Another way to express this attitude of service is by denying oneself. Mark 8:34 says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Jesus is commanding those who call themselves Christians to fight against selfish sin, be willing to sacrifice for Christ, and

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<sup>10</sup> Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2002), 5.



obey his commands, namely, to love God and love one another. Christ is our example, and he is the servant-leader (head) of the husband (man).

### **An Exposition of 1 Corinthians 11**

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul gives an account of how the husband/wife relationship functions, although, he was addressing men and women in worship services, he also relays the reality of the marriage relationship. First Corinthians 11:3 says, “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” After the fall, sin has tainted what godly headship in marriage looks like. The type of leadership that a husband is given by God is the topic of discussion for 1 Corinthians 11.

This leadership describes the husband as having a specific authority over his spouse, in which, the wife would joyfully submit. The husband must exercise this authority only in loving ways; if the husband abuses his authority, tempts his wife to sin, or becomes proud because of his authority, then he is not stewarding his leadership gift in any God-honoring way and must repent from the error of his ways. This authority would be exclusively between the husband and wife. Because the terms used in 1 Corinthians 11 are “man” and “woman,” some have assumed this to apply to all men and women, that is, that men have authority over women. Paul is specifically addressing husbands and wives, as the context lays out because “husband” and “wife” are the normal translations when put together in a passage.<sup>11</sup>

Also, Paul is not addressing the ranked positions as if they were now prescribed by Paul in the churches but rather identifying a truth that has existed from the beginning of creation. Paul is not commanding wives to now submit to husbands because husbands have a new authority within marriage, but Paul is describing the relationship of

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B&H, 2014), 254.

Christ and the church, which needed to be explained to Jews and Gentiles alike. Mark Taylor observes, “The relational hierarchy that frames Paul’s whole discussion and sets the relation of man (husband) and woman (wife) alongside the relation of man to Christ and Christ to God is not a cultural argument, but an argument grounded in the nature of God and his creation.”<sup>12</sup>

Paul is not merely addressing the relationship of a husband to a wife but also the relationship between man and Christ, as well as Christ to God. Christ’s relationship with the Father does not rise and fall within any cultural context but has existed from all eternity, and the foundational truths of marriage have been established when God created Adam and Eve. Christ’s relationship with the Father is now the focus.

Christ’s relationship to God the Father is one of submission. The Son does the will of the Father. Jesus says in John 14:28b that “the Father is greater than I.” Jesus also notes the oneness of their relationship in John 10:30: “I and the Father are one.” Craig L. Blomberg says, “The historic, orthodox view of the Trinity, supported by the New Testament, involves ontological equality (equality of essence or being) combined with functional subordination (submission within role differentiation).”<sup>13</sup> Because Jesus perfectly observed the will of the Father, Jesus did not become insignificant or lose any value or worth. Christ submitted to the Father out of love for the Father and love for the church. The husband submits to Christ out of love for Christ and love for his wife. Again, Jesus’s life and actions function as a model for husbands as to how they ought to love their wives.

Leadership within the marriage is bound up in the word: “head” (*kephalē*) (1 Cor 11:3). Anthony C. Thiselton cautions us that “if we use the term, ‘head,’ its multiple meanings from context to context as serving a polymorphous concept must always be

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<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 254.

<sup>13</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian, 1995), 76.

kept in view.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, it is difficult to pin down the exact meaning that the authors are trying to convey when using the word, “head.” However, although it may be difficult, the task is not impossible. After doing a sufficient analysis, one can come to a reasonable conclusion for what Paul is indicating when he uses the term, “head.”

The complementarian view aligns with a translated meaning of “authority over.” Grudem says, “In fact, all the standard lexicons and dictionaries for New Testament Greek do list the meaning ‘authority over’ for κεφαλή, ‘head.’”<sup>15</sup> Grudem refutes the argument purported by Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen that translates *kephalē* (κεφαλή) as “source.”

David E. Garland shares another view on head. Garland fleshes out the significance of Paul using the term “head” in how one dresses it and how one submits to a headship of authority: “What individuals do to their physical head in worship reflects negatively or positively on their metaphorical head. His purpose is not to write a theology of gender but to correct an unbecoming practice in worship that will tarnish the church’s reputation.”<sup>16</sup>

Headship and submission in marriage has been an issue since Adam and Eve. Pride plays a part in disrupting the marriage union that God desires. Heath Lambert states, “By the time married couples arrive for counseling, there has been some breakdown in the functional structure of headship and submission in marriage.”<sup>17</sup> This is a call to guard marriages against false teachings and selfish desires that are not rooted in

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<sup>14</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 820.

<sup>15</sup> Wayne Grudem, “Does κεφαλή (‘Head’) Mean ‘Source’ Or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples,” *Trinity Journal* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 47, [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/tj/kephale\\_grudem.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/tj/kephale_grudem.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 513-14.

<sup>17</sup> Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2016), 207.

biblical truth.

Unfortunately, Denny Burk observes that “evangelical interpreters . . . do not agree that a wife should submit to her husband.”<sup>18</sup> He points out that 1 Corinthians 11:3 gives a strong indication that “Christ’s headship over man is analogous to a man’s headship over his own wife,” as well as the church’s submitting to Christ in Ephesians 5:24.<sup>19</sup> Although women may feel that it is unfair for men to have a leadership role within marriage, a main concern is when the husband abuses his authority or headship. Christ has never treated the church in this way. Christ has always loved the church, and he gave himself up sacrificially being the ultimate example to husbands on how to live. F. F. Bruce further describes the interplay between husbands and wives: “Paul believed that there was a hierarchical order in creation, and that in this order the man was the ‘head’ of the woman (1 Cor 11:3). . . . The wife’s subordination to her husband has as its counterpart the husband’s obligation to love his wife.”<sup>20</sup> Another way to describe a husband’s love for his wife is having an “unceasing care for her well-being.”<sup>21</sup>

Paul’s exhortation for husbands to love their wives does not negate the roles that each one plays. Paul’s view of the church, where there are many members that have different functions, yet all are necessary (or valuable to making the body work appropriately), points to the same principle of differing functions that work together for the good of all. His rationale for this design is found in 1 Corinthians 12:25-26: “That there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for

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<sup>18</sup> Denny Burk, “As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 17, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 50-52, <https://cbmw.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/JBMW-Fall-12-Complete.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Burk, “As Christ Submits,” 50.

<sup>20</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 84-85.

<sup>21</sup> Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians*, 85.

one other. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” The husband likewise will have concern for his wife, and the wife will have concern for her husband. The “one flesh” principle applies to marriage when one spouse suffers, they both suffer, and, when one spouse is honored, they both rejoice.

Paul was clear in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9: “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” This does not indicate a superiority of man but rather the point is that the man has the leadership position within the family. Paul follows his description of man’s authority by saying, “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God” (1 Cor 11:11-12). The husband and wife are interrelated, and God has made them to depend on one another, while concluding that “all things are from God,” lest the husband or wife became conceited. God is the one who gives authority; God is the one who gives life to all; God is the one who sustains the relationship and oversees their souls. Thomas R. Schreiner says, “I think Paul added the headship of God over Christ right after asserting the headship of man over woman in order to teach that the authority of man over woman does not imply the inferiority of women or the superiority of man.”<sup>22</sup>

### **An Exposition of Ephesians 5**

Another passage in the New Testament that addresses the role of a husband is found in Ephesians 5:25-33. Paul describes Christ’s perfect character and how his love is displayed by caring for and giving himself for the church, his people. Paul goes on to detail the connection between husbands and wives regarding Christ’s relationship with the church. Lambert says, “Paul also makes clear that the love of a husband for his wife

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, “Head Coverings, Prophecies, and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 149.

should image the kind of loving leadership that sent Jesus to the cross to purify his bride, the church (cf. Eph 5:25-30).”<sup>23</sup> This leadership is a sacrificial love, which means the leader (husband) ought to be willing to pay the cost (sacrifice) to serve his wife by caring for her, nourishing her with the Word of God, and looking out for her best interests. According to Darrell L. Bock, “In the passage as a whole, this deference is given in a context where self-sacrificial love is also urged of the husband on the model of Christ, so the ideal is not in the context of a power play but in one of mutual regard.”<sup>24</sup> The husband does not save his wife as Christ saves his people; the husband is not perfect like Christ is perfect. However, Christ is the one who gives the husband the strength through the power of the Holy Spirit to love in a way that emulates Christ’s love for the church.

John Piper makes Ephesians 5:22-25 plain by saying, “Husbands are compared to Christ; wives are compared to the church. Husbands are compared to the head; wives are compared to the body. Husbands are commanded to love as Christ loved; wives are commanded to submit as the church is to submit to Christ.”<sup>25</sup> The fact that each role, being a husband and a wife, have specific commands, would suggest that the roles function in different ways. The husband’s command is one of leadership and initiative; the wife’s command is one of submission and response. Both commands to serve and submit are meant to be carried out in the spirit of joy, not under compulsion, anger, or bitterness.

When the husband serves his wife without believing he deserves anything in return, he is living out this truth in Ephesians. Andrew T. Lincoln points out, “Husbands are asked to exercise the self-giving love that has as its goal only their wives’ good and

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<sup>23</sup> Lambert, *Biblical Counseling*, 206.

<sup>24</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 186.

<sup>25</sup> John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 77.

that will care for the wives without the expectation of reward. . . . The parallel to the love of Christ for the church means, of course, that the husband's love is one that will make even the ultimate sacrifice of life itself."<sup>26</sup> Normally, husbands are not given the choice of giving up their lives, so that their wives might live; however, the principle still remains: the greatest gift someone could give is their own life. John 15:13 states, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." So, how does the husband act out sacrificial love? This selfless, ongoing act of love from the husband is only made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ. Tim Savage reflects, "In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a new self-emptying person is miraculously born in everyone in whom Christ dwells (2 Cor. 5:14-17). . . . In husbands, it is a person who no longer seeks to use his wife but to love her by laying down his life and picking up hers."<sup>27</sup> Husbands find their hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Adam did not lay down his life sacrificially for Eve to protect, lead, and guide, yet Adam's authority was a shadow of Christ's headship in his relationship with the church. Paul says, "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" (Eph 5:23). Paul goes on to give another command for the husband to love his wife. Christ "gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25), serving his bride, to lead her to sanctification, so that he can present her to himself as blameless and pure (Eph 5:26-27). Francis Foulkes explains, "The husband's position as head, and his duty of sacrificial love and devoted care for his wife are but pictures, imperfect, but the best that this life can offer, of Christ as head, of his love, self-sacrifice and concern for his church."<sup>28</sup> Although leadership brings more authority, the person with

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<sup>26</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 374.

<sup>27</sup> Tim Savage, *No Ordinary Marriage: Together for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 89.

<sup>28</sup> Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 167.

the authority also is held accountable accordingly. His thoughts and actions bear a great weight of responsibility and consequences for either good or bad. In Ephesians 5, we see that the husband's initiative of love comes before a wife's submission. The proper order is a husband selflessly loving his wife and her responding in a joyful submission. Rudolf Schnackenburg notes,

Because in the sort of marriage typified by Christ and the church the wife represents the church, she should subordinate herself to her husband as the church does to Christ (vv. 22-24). But the considerably longer command to husbands (w. 25-30) shows that devoted love and care on the part of the husbands after Christ's example is a prerequisite of this. Thereby "subordination" loses all sense of the oppressive or degrading.<sup>29</sup>

Some may argue that servant-leadership is a paradox. How can one serve yet be a leader? If he is the servant, does that necessitate being in subjugation to a master? The husband willingly gives up his desires (namely, for self) to care for his wife. He does not give up authority but rather uses the authority for the good of his wife. It is important to note that the wife is not considered to be less of a person or less responsible for her own actions. God made both male and female in the image of God (Gen 1:27).

Ephesians 5:28 says that "husbands should love their wives as their own bodies," which is a reiteration of the "one flesh" union found in Genesis 2. Lincoln observes, "Since from the Gen 2 perspective marriage declares that husband and wife are, in fact, one body, the husband can be said to be under the obligation to love his wife as his own body."<sup>30</sup> Although it is an obligation, the husband can and should find joy in doing God's will. The husband can love his wife as his own body without it being sinful. If we use Christ as our example of love, he looked forward to the joy that was to come. Hebrews 12:2b says, "For the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." Ernest Best goes on to say that "because Christ's death indicates the extent of his

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<sup>29</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 257.

<sup>30</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 378.



love for the church it is implied that a man should be ready to surrender his life for his wife; love of oneself can hardly be expressed in willingness to die for oneself!”<sup>31</sup> Harold W. Hoehner details the husband’s love found in Ephesians 5:28 by saying it is “‘like’ his love for himself, but also . . . that he should love his own wife ‘as being’ himself.”<sup>32</sup> In the next section, we will explore servant-leadership rooted in the person of Jesus Christ.

### **Servant-Leadership in Christ Jesus**

The first aspect of servant-leadership is humility. The husband models his life after the example of Christ’s humility (Phil 2). Even though Christ is God and had all power and authority, he willingly became a man and submitted to the Father’s will. In marriage, the husband must show humility in leading his wife. The husband will take his wife’s concerns and consider her desires as his own. Humility does not come naturally; he will be tempted to lead in a domineering, prideful way. Ralph P. Martin states, “The antidote to these evil tendencies lies in the cultivation and practice of a characteristic Pauline virtue, humility, *tapeinophrosynē*, which he uses of himself in Acts 20:19.”<sup>33</sup> Before the first sin was committed, Adam and Eve’s desires were not at odds. After the fall, Eve’s desire was for Adam, but he would rule over her (Gen 3:16). The second characteristic of servant-leadership is gentleness. Jesus described himself as “gentle and humble in heart” (Matt 11:29). The third facet of servant-leadership is sacrificial love. Christ became the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). In the next section, we will examine humility, gentleness, and sacrificial love rooted in Christ as displayed in Philippians 2.

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<sup>31</sup> Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 548.

<sup>32</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 782.

<sup>33</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, vol. 11 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1987), 101.

## An Exposition of Philippians 2

A true picture of humility is found in the life of Jesus Christ. Paul expounds upon what this humility looks like in Philippians 2. He admonishes the church in Philippi to live with one another in humility, imitating Christ. Paul then goes on to describe how Christ humbled himself, even to the point of death (and death on a cross). Philippians 2:3-8 states,

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Paul is addressing the believers in Philippi; however, when this passage applies to the marriage relationship, the husband and wife would be urged to do nothing from rivalry or conceit (two potentially besetting sins) but rather, *in humility*, count each other more significant than themselves. Richard Melick concludes, “Paul exhorted the Philippians to proper attitudes in 2:1-4. In 2:5, he repeated that exhortation. Repetition emphasizes its importance. Even more, however, it introduces the model of humility and servanthood: the Lord himself.”<sup>34</sup> The husband can get caught up in looking to his own interests and can forget that he is a servant-leader. He becomes conceited and does not want to serve. Paul gives Christ, who is the head of the church, as the perfect model of humility. Frank Thielman observes, “In verses 6-8, Paul describes both Christ’s divine status and his willingness not only to empty himself by becoming human but also to humble himself by submitting to a cruel form of death.”<sup>35</sup>

This humility willingly gave up a place of dominion and chose a life of service.

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: B&H, 1991), 79.

<sup>35</sup> Frank Thielman, *Philippians: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 89.

Since sin entered the world, people have a disposition to sin. Anthony A. Hoekema observes, “Because of sin, the ruling of the husband over the wife will tend to become tyrannical and domineering. . . . In the Christian community, needless to say, we must try to overcome this result of the Fall, and seek to restore the relationship between husband and wife to that which God originally intended.”<sup>36</sup> Scott describes what humility looks like in a believer: “A humble Christian wants to be useful and fruitful. That’s why we’re here, to prefer others to ourselves, to share Christ with the unsaved, to help those who are saved to be built up in Christ. The humble looks for ways to serve. We won’t wait to be asked, and no task will be too menial.”<sup>37</sup>

The husband may be called to perform many menial tasks at inopportune times with minimal or no resources available. In humility, he should cry out to God for help and trust that God will provide what he needs to do to accomplish God’s will. He can trust in God’s promise: “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:19). David T. Harvey says, “True humility is living confident in Christ’s righteousness, and suspicious of our own.”<sup>38</sup>

Jesus’s humility was not a one-time act. Christ did not choose to become humble later on in his life. His humility was shown before he came to earth. Martin describes, “*He humbled himself* refers to his entire life upon earth in its devotion to the Father and the acceptance of our human lot. But undoubtedly the climax of his life is most prominently in view, namely, his humiliation in the passion and death at Calvary.”<sup>39</sup> This is not an eternal submission of the Son of God but rather his mission on earth

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<sup>36</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 136.

<sup>37</sup> Stuart Scott, “Pursue the Servant’s Mindset,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 3 (1999): 13.

<sup>38</sup> David T. Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do”: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 63.

<sup>39</sup> Martin, *Philippians*, 111.

includes living a life of humility. The suffering, faithfulness, and perseverance through adversity was grounded in his humility that he chose beforehand. Christ knew that “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:11). This humility was not a popular notion or practice during the times of Jesus. Martin asserts, “True biblical humility was frowned upon in the ancient world as despicable because it was misunderstood as abject cringing before one’s fellow men.”<sup>40</sup> Humility had a weakness attached to it. Lincoln notes, “As is frequently observed, humility was an attitude that was regarded primarily negatively in the Greco-Roman world and associated with contemptible servility.”<sup>41</sup>

Although Christ became a servant of all, he did not remain there forever. He was exalted above everyone and everything. God the Father chose to give him that place of honor, authority, and dominion above all things. Thielman states, “The way in which the passage makes these statements, moreover, has led most scholars to believe that it is an early Christian hymn, taken over and perhaps modified by Paul at this point in his argument.”<sup>42</sup> The husband will receive much grace being a humble, servant-leader in his family. He need not be worried that God would be unfair or unjust in dealing with his situation. The husband can be humble, serving his wife, looking out for her interests, knowing that God will give him the power through the Holy Spirit. Charles B. Cousar sums up humility in this way: “In practical terms, it involves moving beyond a preoccupation with one’s own affairs to a concern for the interests of others (2:3).”<sup>43</sup> When Paul spurs the Philippians to have the same attitude of Christ; he literally is saying

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<sup>40</sup> Martin, *Philippians*, 101.

<sup>41</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 235.

<sup>42</sup> Thielman, *Philippians*, 85.

<sup>43</sup> Charles B. Cousar, *Reading Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 150.

“think this in you.”<sup>44</sup> The husband should be actively thinking about how to be humble and loving toward his wife. Bruce describes humility in detail:

True humility . . . was not esteemed as a virtue in pagan antiquity; the word meant “mean-spiritedness.” The OT attitude is different: those who would walk with God must humble themselves to do so (Mic 6:8), because he makes his dwelling by preference with those who are “of a humble and contrite spirit” (Isa 57:15). Humility is especially fitting for the followers of Jesus, who was “gentle and lowly in heart” (Matt 11:29), and a community in which this grace is cultivated is likely to be free from the tensions which spring from pride and self-assertiveness.<sup>45</sup>

By coming to the earth in humility, Jesus embodies the essence of gentleness by taking the form of a servant instead of coming as a conquering ruler. The Jewish people expected a king to be born so he could overthrow the Roman Empire; however, Christ came to serve. Jesus could have sent down legions of angels at any moment, preventing the gruesome crucifixion, yet he chose to remain silent and bear the reproach of all. Christ’s posture was humility, his method was gentleness, and his act of love was sacrificial.

Christ willingly obeyed the Father by going to the cross. No one has greater love than Christ. The husband can only be like his teacher; he is not greater than his teacher. This self-sacrificial love will require the husband to humble himself before God and his wife and love in a gentle, self-sacrificial way.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter explored the foundations of marriage between a man and a woman and what marriage looked like before sin entered the world. This examination was performed in Genesis 2. God gave the husband a leadership role within the marriage and continues to give husbands the strength to lead by resting in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the perfect model and example for the husband to

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<sup>44</sup> Thielman, *Philippians*, 89.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce, *Ephesians*, 80-81.

follow. In 1 Corinthians 11, we saw that Jesus is the head of the body, which is the church, and marriage mirrors this reality. “Head” is not translated as source but rather one who has authority. The husband is the head of the wife, yet, with this place of leadership, the husband must be self-giving. In Ephesians 5, the husband is commanded to love his wife in the same way that Christ loves the church. And in Philippians 2, Christ demonstrates humility, gentleness, and self-sacrificial love, which is essential for a godly husband.

CHAPTER 3  
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED  
TO A HUSBAND’S SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

**Introduction**

Since Adam’s first sin, husbands have had to fight against their sinful flesh as being domineering, selfish, and harsh. Wayne Grudem says, “The curse brought a *distortion* of Adam’s humble, considerate leadership and Eve’s intelligent, willing submission to that leadership which existed before the fall.”<sup>1</sup> This chapter will address how a husband can provide that leadership and live in a way that is pleasing to God as well as provide an analysis of modern-day solutions for marriage issues from secular and Christian sources.

As the leader in the family, husbands will answer for what he did or did not do as the authority in the family. Grudem says, “God thought of Adam as the leader of his family, the one to be called to account first for what had happened in the family.”<sup>2</sup> That principle holds true today; God is looking to the husband as the leader of the family, and he will be held responsible for what God has told him to do, which, in turn, has a profound impact on the family.

Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again to give them power over sin. Progressive sanctification is a struggle and requires ongoing dependence on the Holy Spirit. In this chapter, we will explore biblical counseling methods that address how a husband should live in a God-honoring way, selflessly loving his wife by being a servant-

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 464.

<sup>2</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 463.

leader in humility and gentleness. Scripture will be the foundation to these methods of walking in obedience to God.

### **Servant-Leadership Reclaimed**

A husband has a duty to look after the matters of his family, starting with his wife. Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones say that the husband is “(1) to love and cherish his wife and to treat her with respect and dignity; (2) to bear primary responsibility for the marriage union and ultimate authority over the family; and (3) to provide food, clothing, and other necessities for his wife.”<sup>3</sup> This requires him to actively participate in what her wants and needs are. He should not follow his wife into sin, if that was suggested by his wife (see Job’s wife in Job 2:9-10 or Eve in Gen 3:6); instead, he should stand up for righteousness, justice, and faithfulness.

The husband ought to fight against his own sinful desires about comfort, ease, and personal desires that may conflict with what his wife needs. Köstenberger and Jones say, “Loving harmony will be replaced by a pattern of struggle in which the woman seeks to exert control over her husband, who responds by asserting his authority—often in an ungodly manner by either passively forcing her into action or actively dominating her (Gen 3:16; see 4:7).”<sup>4</sup> The husband will need to repent of his ungodly actions and thoughts, while trying to depend on the strength of Christ to love his wife. If a husband responds in an ungodly way, he falls into two main categories outlined by Grudem—aggressiveness and passivity.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, the husband can be overly aggressive in how he handles the conflict, or, the husband can become reclusive or unresponsive in the

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<sup>3</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *Marriage and the Family: Biblical Essentials* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *Marriage and the Family*, 15-16.

<sup>5</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 467.



situation. Either way, the husband is not loving his wife in that moment or caring for her needs.

The term “need” has been overused by husbands and wives in order to justify sinning against the other person. For example, if a husband says that he needs to be shown respect in a certain way (i.e., praised in front of dinner guests by his wife) and she does not give him what he “needs,” then he justifies in his mind that it is good and right to speak harshly with her about his displeasure.

The husband could withhold love and affection because he did not feel loved by his wife in that situation. In either case, the husband is trying to pay back his wife for a perceived wrong that she did against him, although she did not overtly sin against him in that instance.<sup>6</sup> Jonathan D. Holmes says, “They drill down on one particular ‘language’ and say that the only way their spouse’s love is good enough is if it is expressed in exactly the way they want to be loved, according to their self-perceived needs and standards. This is not biblical love.”<sup>7</sup>

Because no moral law exists that says a wife needs to praise her husband each time there are dinner guests over to their house, the wife was not sinning in this particular case of not praising her husband. The husband’s perceived “need” could be rooted in his pride that resides in the heart. This pride exerts itself as a demand and a need. The truth is that the husband does not need to be praised by his wife in front of people. The husband *needs* Jesus. The husband *needs* to repent of pride and *needs* to be forgiven of his own sin by God.

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<sup>6</sup> One must acknowledge that there are sins of commission (sinful words or acts done intentionally or unintentionally), and there are sins of omission (sinful words or acts left undone intentionally or unintentionally). If any particular sin is committed, that person needs to repent of his or her sin. The person might not even be aware of the sin, which makes it important for each Christian to be open to hearing their faults and not over-reacting to a complaint. The husband ought to listen carefully, pray continually, and seek what the Lord has for him in learning about his sin (especially from the mouth of his wife).

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan D. Holmes, *Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 93.

Servant-leadership flows out of the heart. One of the biblical counseling principles is focusing on the heart of the counselee, and, in this case, the heart of the husband who wants to be praised. Jeremy Pierre says, “The heart was designed to worship, and if it is not being utilized to worship God, it will worship something else.”<sup>8</sup> The husband will worship what he wants, for example, sports, recognition, money, peace, at the expense of loving God and loving his family. If the husband is worshipping God rightly, his love for God will naturally flow to loving his family, namely his wife. The husband is worshipping recognition in our example, and this desire comes from his heart. He is responsible for his own desires; his wife is not making him feel or act in any way contrary to what he wants.

### **Secular and Contemporary Christian Wisdom on Love and Marriage**

Modern wisdom does not point to Christ as the foundation to marriage, relationships, and love. Christian authors and speakers also shy away from using the Bible and finding their source and model in Jesus. In this section, we will examine the paradigms espoused by secular writers as well as Christian pastors. This will be in contrast to the biblical worldview and biblical counseling approach laid out in this paper.

Instead of sin being a root problem for conflict in marriages and that which prevents husbands from loving their wives, “experts” point to other causes, such as problems from childhood. Greg Baer says, “When people don’t get enough unconditional love as children, they feel terribly empty and afraid. People who feel empty and afraid can’t be happy, and they can’t have loving relationships, because they’re too busy filling their own needs and protecting themselves.”<sup>9</sup> The parents are to blame for the husband’s

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<sup>8</sup> Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 65.

<sup>9</sup> Greg Baer, *Real Love: The Truth about Finding Unconditional Love and Fulfilling Relationships* (New York: Gotham Books, 2003), 12.

lack of love. Baer coined the phrase “Real Love” to embody the type of love that is needed for fulfilling marriages. It should be noted that “Real Love” is not connected to Christ in anyway; it merely is some sort of feeling that is gained over time. This “Real Love” has extraordinary power, though; Baer claims, “Fortunately, as you find Real Love now, you can heal all the wounds of the past, repair the foundation, and build the kind of life you’ve always wanted.”<sup>10</sup> So, according to Baer, someone cannot have a loving relationship because they did not get “Real Love” in his childhood, yet he can find “Real Love” later in life, which will be the cure for all past relationship ailments.

Baer portrays this “Real Love” as the savior to all relationship problems; however, the basis for this kind of love is self-motivated happiness, devoid of God’s glory, and centered on certain behaviors and feelings. I agree with Baer that we should not “blame your partner for your unhappiness,” yet he gives the reason for this unhappiness by saying it is “caused by a long-standing lack of Real Love in your life.”<sup>11</sup> A husband’s own joy, happiness, sorrow, or despair are not determined by his wife; his emotional responses flow from his own heart, and the heart will never be satisfied with things of this world. Our hearts yearn for what is eternal (Eccl 3:11).

Next, within Christian circles, Gary Chapman’s *The 5 Love Languages* (words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, physical touch) have been popular for many years and continue to wield a great influence on how Christians think about love and speak to one another during formal or informal counseling. Chapman uses the analogy of a “love tank” that needs to constantly be filled.<sup>12</sup> If a husband can find out what his wife’s “love language” is, now he can meet this innate *need* that she has, which will, in turn, keep the emotional love tank full and will preserve the marriage successfully

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<sup>10</sup> Baer, *Real Love*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Baer, *Real Love*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts* (Chicago: Northfield, 2010), 23.

together. Chapman states, “Once you identify and learn to speak your spouse’s primary love language, I believe that you will have discovered the key to a long-lasting, loving marriage.”<sup>13</sup> Chapman boils down the marriage relationship, which is a picture of Christ and the church, into merely knowing and acting on certain love languages that every person has and “needs.” Chapman’s philosophy of marriage is built upon his opinion that “at the heart of humankind’s existence is the desire to be intimate and to be loved by another. Marriage is designed to meet that need for intimacy and love. That is why the ancient biblical writings spoke of the husband and wife becoming ‘one flesh.’”<sup>14</sup> Becoming one flesh is not founded on people’s “need” for intimacy and love. Jesus was not married, and he is the only human who lived a sinless life. Christ did not lack any sort of love. He did not “need” to be married in order to have a fulfilled life. The danger in using Chapman’s approach is that each spouse can demand the other to give the love language that is “needed” when, in reality, the love language might be helpful for relating with one another, but not sustainable for how and why a husband ought to love his wife.

In order to show that using certain love languages is not determinative to a great relationship, one must look no further than Jesus’s friendship with Judas. Jesus did not wrong Judas in any way. Any interaction that Jesus had with Judas was loving; in other words, Jesus would have used any sort of love language perfectly, whether talking with him, spending time with him, giving to Judas, serving him, or using a physical touch. Jesus was betrayed by Judas *because* of Judas’s own sin and greed for money. There must be a better source for love than merely relating to one another with certain love languages.

Another popular Christian author, Emerson Eggerichs, created the *Love and Respect* series, which focuses on the wife showing the husband respect. He figured that

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<sup>13</sup> Chapman, *Love Languages*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Chapman, *Love Languages*, 22.

most marriage material addresses men having to love their wives, but he found that if the wife was giving her husband the respect that he desires, then his love would naturally flow as a reaction to her respect. Eggerichs says his book “is about how the wife can fulfill her need to be loved by giving her husband what he needs—respect.”<sup>15</sup> Again, we see dangerous and misleading language with unbiblical causes and effects. His emphasis of wives giving their husbands respect (which fulfills her own need) can give the impression that the husband is dependent on her for respect before he can love her. When Eggerichs uses “need”-based language, it sets the stage for one spouse to demand something from the other. For example, Eggerichs gives an interpretation and application of Ephesians 5:33: “Paul is clearly saying that wives need love and husbands need respect.”<sup>16</sup> Does that mean that Paul is saying wives do not need respect and husbands do not need love? Eggerichs does not use Christ/husband and church/wife to describe how the marriage relationship should work. If he did, then he would not have started with how the wife must make the first move for the relationship to flourish. “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). The husband is to lay down his life and lovingly lead his wife by serving.

Two more causes for conflict between husband and wife from secular perspectives include an absence of friendship and a lack of understanding. The first remedy for conflict is having a *deep friendship*. John Gottman and Nan Silver spell out this key to marriage: “At the heart of my program is the simple truth that happy marriages are based on a deep friendship. By this I mean a mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other’s company.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, a deep friendship between husband and wife

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<sup>15</sup> Emerson Eggerichs, *Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Eggerichs, *Love and Respect*, 15.

<sup>17</sup> John Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country’s Foremost Relationship Expert* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 19.

will be the *cause* of a happy marriage. Gottman and Silver do not believe that just “learning to resolve your conflicts”<sup>18</sup> will make a happy marriage but rather having a friendship that can withstand any conflict is the roadmap to success. What does a deep friendship look like? A summary view is that “they also support each other’s hopes and aspirations and build a sense of purpose into their lives together.”<sup>19</sup> Because Gottman and Silver do not believe the Bible to be life-giving and worthy of following, their definitions of “happy” and “purpose” and “friendship” differ greatly from a biblical worldview. They mention that “there are deeper, hidden issues that fuel these superficial conflicts and make them far more intense and hurtful than they would otherwise be,”<sup>20</sup> but they do not admit that those issues are rooted in the heart. Humankind has a sin problem that only Jesus Christ can atone.

The second cause for conflict from a popular marriage author, John Gray, is the lack of understanding. In his book, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, Gray simply states, “Only when we do not understand one another is there tension, resentment, or conflict.”<sup>21</sup> Gray mainly focuses on the differences between men and women; he also holds a rather pessimistic view of love. He says, “Very few people, indeed, are able to grow in love. Yet, it does happen.”<sup>22</sup> The truth is that men and women are different, but Gray uses the differences as *the* springboard to a loving relationship. Gray asserts, “When men and women are able to respect and accept their differences then love has a chance to blossom,”<sup>23</sup> and, “Love is magical, and it can last, if we remember

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<sup>18</sup> Gottman and Silver, *Making Marriage Work*, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Gottman and Silver, *Making Marriage Work*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Gottman and Silver, *Making Marriage Work*, 23.

<sup>21</sup> John Gray, preface to *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), xxix.

<sup>22</sup> Gray, *Men Are from Mars*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Gray, *Men Are from Mars*, 7.

our differences.”<sup>24</sup> Gray believes that conflict rests in the differences between men and women, and understanding those differences (or being able to deal with those differences in a better way) will provide the peace and harmony that everyone is seeking in a marriage. Again, Gray is merely observing some behavioral tendencies that men and women exhibit and providing basic steps on how to cope with those differences. His tactics might last for a while, but they will not provide the depth and foundation that is needed for a marriage to be God-honoring, displaying Christ’s relationship with the church.

### **Practical Servant-Leadership from a Biblical Perspective**

Servant-leadership entails seeking the wife’s actual needs (physical, relational, and spiritual) on a daily basis above one’s own desires, selflessly giving as Christ gives to the church. For example, when the husband gets home from work, he initiates how he could serve the family. This would put his desire for peace, relaxation, food, or anything else on hold while he gives of his time, energy, money, and attention to his family.

This self-giving love that Jesus perfectly accomplished and continues to perfectly sustain is the reason and foundation of humble, gentle servant-leadership. Aubrey Malphurs says, “In John 13:1-17, Jesus defines servant-leaders as those who *humbly serve others because they love them*. Humility describes our manner of leadership or how we lead. Service is the very essence of our leadership, from which other people benefit.”<sup>25</sup>

A practical way that a husband can exhibit servant-leadership is by leading his family in worship. He will model church membership and lead family devotions at home.

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<sup>24</sup> Gray, *Men Are from Mars*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 21.

He will actively be involved in fellowship within the church body. He will pray for his wife, pray with his wife, and lead his family in prayer. He will lead his family by being an example of Christ to them and show them what a relationship with Christ looks like, asking for forgiveness when he sins and repenting of those sins. The husband will read God's Word daily and read Scripture with his wife. He will provide for their physical needs for food, clothing, and shelter as well.

### **Gentleness in Servant-Leadership**

Another facet of servant-leadership revolves around gentleness. The world sees gentleness as a sign of weakness, especially from a leader. In business and the military, the leader gives commands, and those who are under his authority should follow. There are no discussions, debates, or suggestions. The husband may feel as though he should lead in the home in this way. The husband must fight against his inclination to be forceful or apathetic to emotions, especially if he has a job in the military, business world, or has grown up with this style of leadership in the home. These external circumstances are factors in how the husband leads; however, these circumstances do not determine the husband's actions or thoughts. Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23); the Spirit enables the believer to display the character of God.

One way that a husband can show Christlikeness in his marriage is to display Christ's gentleness. If he is harsh or sharp with his words, the relationship becomes strained. Husbands can inappropriately use the Bible's exhortation for wives to submit by being harsh with them. Robert D. Jones says, "Anger, in both its revealed and concealed forms, damages relationships. It severs marriages and alienates families. It keeps us from reconciling relationships and pursuing peace. Sinful anger excuses our planks and



highlights others' specks (Matt. 7:3-5)."<sup>26</sup> Anger, which flows from the heart, can be a main source of tension within the marriage.

He justifies his commanding and domineering attitude but disregards his submission to Christ. Because Jesus was gentle and lowly in heart, he is seen as the Good Shepherd, caring for his sheep (John 10:11). Jesus does not lose his patience and give up on his children. God is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exod 34:6b).

Gentleness "involves the courtesy, considerateness, and willingness to waive one's rights that come from seeking the common good without being concerned for personal reputation or gain."<sup>27</sup> Gentleness has not been promoted in American culture as a high virtue for the husband. However, according to Scripture, gentleness is displayed in Christ (2 Cor 10:1). Paul David Tripp explains, "Love is speaking kindly and gently, even in moments of disagreement, refusing to attack your spouse's character or assault his or her intelligence."<sup>28</sup> This can be particularly difficult in the moment of the argument. Rob Green says, "The Lord does not say to be gentle only with those who respond well. Rather, the Lord said that his servant must not be quarrelsome but must gently correct those who do not want to listen (2 Tim 2:24-26)."<sup>29</sup> If the husband does what is right and relates to his wife in gentleness, yet she responds poorly, he still is commanded to treat his wife in love because his motive is to please the Lord and glorify God.

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<sup>26</sup> Robert D. Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 160.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 236.

<sup>28</sup> Paul David Tripp, *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 195.

<sup>29</sup> Rob Green, "The Role of the Counselor," in *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*, by Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 139.

Gentleness is rooted in the gospel—in the work of Christ on the cross. The cross is the symbol; Jesus is the source. Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp remind us that “the Cross enables me to serve others out of a heart of compassion, gentleness, forbearance, kindness, patience, and love. The closer I get to people, the more these attitudes are needed, because that is when I am affected by their weaknesses and sin (and vice versa). The closer we are to one another, the more our hearts are revealed.”<sup>30</sup> The husband’s heart will constantly be exposed through his interaction with his family, especially his wife.

If someone is showing gentleness, he will also be exhibiting patience; likewise, if someone is patient, there is gentleness exhibited in his approach to the situation and in his heart. F. F. Bruce says, “Gentleness has much in common with patience. . . . Patience, too, belongs to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22); like compassion and kindness it is a quality of God which should be reproduced in those who bear his image.”<sup>31</sup> Colossians 3:12 says, “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” Again, in Scripture, people are exhorted to be patient. Paul says, “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all” (1 Thess 5:14).

Paul does not give any qualifiers on who we need to be patient with, and he does not say how long we need to be patient. Simply, we need to be patient with everyone. Grudem defines patience by saying, “God’s *patience* means God’s goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period of time.”<sup>32</sup> God’s patience is normally mentioned along with God’s grace and mercy. A Christian is commanded to

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<sup>30</sup> Timothy S. Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change*, 2nd ed. (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008), 218.

<sup>31</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 81.

<sup>32</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 200.

be patient in suffering (1 Pet 2:20), as well as “slow to anger” (Jas 1:19). When someone overlooks an offense, does not get angry or is easily angered with a view to seeing the offender repent, then that person is displaying God’s attribute of patience. Paul notes God’s patience in Romans 2:4: “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”

If someone is being sinned against, he can show patience just as God does toward us. Tripp says, “Love is being lovingly honest and humbly approachable in times of misunderstanding and being more committed to unity and love than you are to winning, accusing, or being right.”<sup>33</sup> For the husband to be approachable, he must exhibit patience in listening to what his wife has to say, even if he does not want to hear something difficult. He must exercise this patience and accept the truth that he is hearing. He can be thankful that his wife loves him in this way.

Jones describes a situation where he refused help from his wife on a simple project in the house. He did not respond in gentleness but rather pride. Jones later examined his heart: he wanted control and the praise of man (the desire to be seen as competent in handyman work). This harshness had deeper desires in the heart, where he sought repentance.<sup>34</sup> Pride will be present if harshness abounds; in the same way, humility will accompany gentleness.

Husbands are commanded to be gentle and to live with their wives “in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Pet 3:7). One reason for a husband to live in an understanding way with his wife is so that his prayers will not be hindered. If the husband is honoring his wife by listening, loving, and

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<sup>33</sup> Tripp, *Realities of Marriage*, 192.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 66-67.

caring for her, then his prayers will not be self-focused but will raise to God as an offering of sacrifice for the good of his spouse.

Practical ways that a husband can be gentle with his wife are speaking kindly to her, listening to her voice, and refusing to argue. He can cultivate a relationship that is compassionate and caring for her when she is sick. The husband must protect his wife and use his strength for guarding his wife from danger. He must never use physical force against his wife.

### **Humility in Servant-Leadership**

Jesus describes himself as “gentle” and “lowly in heart” (Matt 11:29), which shows this interplay between gentleness and humility. Jones says, “Amazingly, this is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus self-describes his inner person: he is gentle and humble in heart toward those in need.”<sup>35</sup> Husbands need to pay attention to this character because Christ is the head of the church as a husband is head of his wife. Therefore, husbands must emulate Christ. Ken Sande says, “He has given those in authority strict commands not to take advantage of their positions, but rather to diligently serve and look out for the well-being of those whom they are called to lead (Mark 10:42-45; cf. Eph 5:25-33; 6:4, 9; 1 Pet 3:7; 5:1-3).”<sup>36</sup> The husband should be leading his wife in humility that is found in Christ alone.

Jesus calls his followers to “take my yoke upon you” (Matt 11:29). Donald Alfred Hagner says, “‘Yoke’ (ζυγόν) is a common metaphor for the law, both in Judaism (*m. ‘Abot* 3:5; *m. Ber.* 2:2; cf. 1QH 6:19) and in the New Testament (Acts 15:10; Gal

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<sup>35</sup> Robert D. Jones, “The Counseling Process, Step One: Enter Their World,” in Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 167.

<sup>36</sup> Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 123.

5:1).”<sup>37</sup> R. T. France says, “A ‘yoke’ implies obedience, indeed often slavery (Gal 5:1; 1 Tim 6:1); what makes the difference is what sort of master one is serving. So, the beneficial effect of Jesus’s yoke derives from the character of the one who offers it.”<sup>38</sup>

Jesus continues to show his followers how complex his character is and his mission for salvation. Although Christ had all authority and power, he made himself like a servant (Phil 2), which is the ultimate display of humility. Even though Jesus is immortal, he took on a mortal body, and, although having all authority, he is gentle and humble.

Hagner states, “Despite the overwhelming significance of his person and his mission, Jesus comes meekly and humbly as a servant (cf. the Servant of the Lord in Isa 42:2-3; 53:1-12) and thus shows himself to be more worthy of trust than are the Pharisees.”<sup>39</sup> France further explains how Jesus can be the Messiah and how his character can be gentle and lowly:

Human convention finds it hard to envisage of “meek and lowly” one who can claim that everything has been entrusted to him by God and who has just been declaring in forthright terms God’s judgment on those who have rejected his message. But in the kingdom of heaven meekness is not incompatible with authority, and in 12:15-21 we shall be reminded of the non-confrontational style of God’s appointed Messiah. With those who are unresponsive and hostile to his message Jesus can be fierce, but to the “little children” to whom God has revealed the truth he is gentle and considerate, “lowly” not in the sense of being unaware of his exalted status but of not using it to browbeat those under his authority.<sup>40</sup>

The husband needs to look outside of himself, focusing on his wife, looking out for her interests in an understanding way. This takes humility. Pierre says, “In terms of thoughts, loving others means people will think regularly about the interests and

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<sup>37</sup> Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC, vol. 33a (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 324.

<sup>38</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 337.

<sup>39</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 324.

<sup>40</sup> France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 337.

concerns of those around them rather than dwelling on their own.”<sup>41</sup> Along with humility, the husband needs patience, gentleness, and self-control. J. Ramsey Michaels says, “The translation correctly implies, however, that ‘living with a woman’ is not a mere physical function but something a man must *know how* to do. To Peter, such ‘knowledge’ is specifically Christian, the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.”<sup>42</sup> The husband does not innately *know* how to love his wife. He must learn the way of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit by reading, studying, and meditating on Scripture.

A practical way that a husband can show his wife humility is by setting her needs before his own. He could show small acts of kindness, such as opening the door for her, letting his wife share her thoughts before he expresses his own, thinking about areas in his own life first that need to change before accusing or blame-shifting. He will show humility by taking on the harder tasks and volunteering to serve.

### **Sacrificial Love in Servant-Leadership**

The third aspect of servant-leadership discussed in this paper is sacrificial love. This sacrificial love is in opposition to the “love tank” theory by Gary Chapman in the *The 5 Love Languages*. There is no scriptural support for the existence of a love tank, and the status of the love tank is dependent on the other person. A husband’s ability to love is based on Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and guided by the Word of Christ. A husband would not take the initiative to love his wife if he waited to be filled. Although many marriages have been helped by Chapman’s model, it falls short of a biblical model for marriage.

Also, Eggerichs’s *Love and Respect* does not ultimately give a biblical example of sacrificial love on the part of the husband because it starts with a sacrificial

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<sup>41</sup> Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 162.

<sup>42</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC, vol. 49 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 168.

act from the wife. His theory depends on the wife giving the husband respect *first*. Again, many couple have been helped by this method, but how have those marriages conformed to the image of Christ and the church? The husband ought to be the initiator for serving and loving, just like Christ.

In the New Testament, the main word used for love is *agape*. John M. Frame says that *agape* love is “spontaneous, unmotivated, indifferent to the present value of the object, and self-giving.”<sup>43</sup> To expand on the self-giving concept, Grudem explains, “God’s love means that God eternally gives of himself to others. This definition understands love as self-giving for the benefit of others.”<sup>44</sup> The main motivation to giving something to someone or serving someone is rooted in God’s character. God is the perfect model of how we ought to live this principle. God is also the one who enables us to love in this way.

The selfless nature of love can be found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5; it states, “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.” Frame says, “The love of Christ is the standard of the Christian life. Now we see that such love involves humility, a self-abasement that does not destroy us but fulfills what God meant us to be.”<sup>45</sup> God is working in the life of his children to become more like Jesus. Christ’s birth, life, death, and resurrection display the perfect standard of sacrificial love. Simply put, Leslie Vernick asserts, “Jesus’s love was a sacrificial love.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 235.

<sup>44</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 198.

<sup>45</sup> Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 253.

<sup>46</sup> Leslie Vernick, *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong* (New York: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 155.

Sacrificial love “does not insist on its own way.” It looks “to the interest of others” (Phil 2:4). Gary and Betsy Ricucci flush out this sacrificial love of the husband: “Sacrifice means providing for her, making sure she never has to sacrifice before, or more, than you do. . . . Sacrifice means protecting her, giving particular attention to the physical, spiritual, emotional, and relational demands on her life in different seasons.”<sup>47</sup> Adam was given the opportunity to embody this sacrificial love when God made Eve. Tim Savage says, “For there to be an exchange of self-giving love, there must be duality within humanity. As a lone human, Adam cannot manifest the divine image.”<sup>48</sup>

If the 1 Corinthians 13 passage is applied to husbands in a context of servant-leadership and sacrificial love, then we can see that the husband should respond to his wife with kindness. This emulates God’s character in love: “God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance” (Rom 2:4b). If the husband does not receive the same treatment from his wife, he still needs to respond with kindness. Rob Lister says, “In the kindness of God it seems that he has given husbands a daily opportunity to rely on the gospel as they resist a sense of entitlement to ease. By pouring themselves out daily for the well-being of their wives, husbands are pressed into the mold of Christ (Eph 5:25-30).”<sup>49</sup> This love is constantly looking out for the other person’s good. Vernick says, “We are willing to sacrifice ourselves, our needs, our desires, our wants, and our dreams for our spouse’s good.”<sup>50</sup>

Husbands are not given a vacation from loving their spouses. Christ calls each person to “deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Tripp

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<sup>47</sup> Gary Ricucci and Betsy Ricucci, *Love That Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 36.

<sup>48</sup> Tim Savage, *No Ordinary Marriage: Together for God’s Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 35.

<sup>49</sup> Rob Lister, “Husbands, Love Your Wives by Being the ‘Bad Guy,’” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 10.

<sup>50</sup> Vernick, *How to Act Right*, 156.



says, “Love is a daily commitment to admit your sin, weakness, and failure and to resist the temptation to offer an excuse or shift the blame.”<sup>51</sup> Jesus teaches his followers that they should ask for forgiveness daily in the Lord’s prayer (Matt 6:9-13).

Men must always be alert to their own hearts and bent toward sin. Jay E. Adams says, “The fundamental problem is not some *effect* of sin (as the advocates of these systems think), but sin itself.”<sup>52</sup> Although humanity has been feeling the effect of sin for thousands of years, each person has to come to grips with his own sin.

If the husband does not feel loved, he might solely blame his wife for those feelings. Lane and Tripp say, “Blame-shifting is the most natural and comfortable explanation for our sin and it has been in use for thousands of years.”<sup>53</sup> This could start a chain reaction of distrust where the husband withdraws from pursuing his wife’s heart, loving her, serving her needs, and fostering a growing relationship in Christ. James D. G. Dunn also states, “What is in view, therefore, is probably the feeling of the dominant partner who can legally enforce his will on his wife but who will not thereby win her love and respect and can thus feel cheated and embittered at not receiving what he regards as his due.”<sup>54</sup>

France gives a detailed explanation of the “one flesh” mystery: “The God who first designed humanity in two sexes also laid it down . . . that those two sexes should come together in an indissoluble union of ‘one flesh,’ a union which takes precedence over even the close relationship of a man with his parents.”<sup>55</sup> When people are joined in

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<sup>51</sup> Tripp, *Realities of Marriage*, 192.

<sup>52</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Committed to Craftsmanship in Biblical Counseling* (Cordova, TN: Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2019), 65.

<sup>53</sup> Lane and Tripp, *How People Change*, 131.

<sup>54</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 249.

<sup>55</sup> France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 499-500.

marriage, they reflect the original one-flesh state that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden of Eden. Marriage is illustrated by using the imagery of “gluing” or “welding” something together.<sup>56</sup> This is a perpetual, lasting bond that is put together by God. However, the “indissoluble union” is the form in which marriage was designed to be; although the design has not changed, the current reality of living in a sin-filled world makes this union dissolvable under two exceptions in Scripture: infidelity (Matt 5:31-32) and abandonment (1 Cor 7:10-16).

So far, we have seen how the husband is commanded to love his wife, specifically from a position of equality, where each person is commanded to love one another; however, as the husband is the head of the wife, he is in a position of authority and that changes the dynamic of the relationship. Köstenberger and Jones say, “There are, however, those who would blur the biblical roles of man and woman or deny the wife’s subordination. Yet nowhere is the *man* called the *woman’s* ‘helper.’ Thus equality and distinctness, complementarity, and submission/authority must be held in fine balance.”<sup>57</sup>

In the heat of an argument, this “fine balance” is often overlooked or thrown out completely. The husband’s desires can get in the way. James puts it this way: “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel” (Jas 4:1-2a). Savage summarizes this tension by saying, “Every rift can be traced to a single cause: the failure to express self-giving love.”<sup>58</sup>

James points out that arguing comes from the desires (from the heart), and, when those desires or passions are not fulfilled, the person is willing to sin to get them (i.e., fight, quarrel, murder, covet). While the person is sinning (i.e., quarrelling), he is

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<sup>56</sup> France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 499-500.

<sup>57</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *Marriage and the Family*, 14-15.

<sup>58</sup> Savage, *No Ordinary Marriage*, 39.

not thinking about the other person's interests or how to serve her. He displays annoyance, gets physical, argues, yells, or tries any other manipulative tactic to get what he wants.

If a husband gets stuck in a pattern of sin, how does he change his heart (desires)? Pierre says, "The key to change will always be a dynamic relationship of faith with our heavenly Father, his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit who empowers God's people."<sup>59</sup> The husband cannot have a God-honoring marriage unless he is walking with God on a daily basis in humility. Self-help books will ultimately disappoint the husband and the wife. Holmes says, "Biblical love in marriage flows out of our relationship with Christ into a covenantal commitment to self-sacrifice in small and large ways for the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of my spouse."<sup>60</sup>

If the couple learns new communication techniques, they might help out the marriage for a short period of time, but that would depend on what kind of help the couple is requiring. If someone learns to sin more effectively, then the new communication skills would be eternally harmful for one or both of the people involved. The relationship with Christ is key to fulfill man's purpose.

David Powlison explains the significance of the leader displaying love: "You particularly image Christ by looking out for the well-being of those God has placed within your care. Leaders are to model themselves on Christ's way of leading: 'Christ loved and gave himself up for us' (Eph 5:2; 5:25)."<sup>61</sup> Tripp clarifies in this way: "Love is

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<sup>59</sup> Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 239.

<sup>60</sup> Holmes, *Counsel for Couples*, 89.

<sup>61</sup> David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 66.

willing self-sacrifice for the good of another that does not require reciprocation or that the person being loved is deserving.”<sup>62</sup>

Another passage in the New Testament calls us to lay down our lives for each other; 1 John 3:16 says, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” I. Howard Marshall depicts the supreme cost of self-sacrifice: “But now John goes on to make the devastating claim that we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers . . . most probably he was thinking of the limit to which one may have to go in self-abnegation, and his statement is a way of saying that love must be prepared to meet the needs of others whatever the cost in self-sacrifice.”<sup>63</sup>

A disagreement can arise between spouses if one does not feel as if his or her “needs” are not fulfilled; however, one should be careful on what he defines as a “need.” As noted earlier, someone’s desires could be masquerading as assumed “needs.” David T. Harvey explains, “But it is very tempting to justify demands by thinking of them as needs and then to punish one another if those needs are not satisfied. A needs-based marriage does not testify to God’s glory; it is focused on personal demands competing for supremacy.”<sup>64</sup> Tripp says, “Marriage exposes their controlling desire to get what they want. When my hope is in my ability to rule the day, my spouse becomes a constant threat rather than an intimate companion. This destroys any hope of experiencing the loving, self-sacrificial unity at the heart of any good marriage.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Tripp, *Realities of Marriage*, 189.

<sup>63</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), 92.

<sup>64</sup> David T. Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do”*: *Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 74.

<sup>65</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 31.

Sacrificial love serves the other person at cost to oneself. The cost could come in various forms. There are many examples in the Bible. Esther took a risk, which could have cost her life, to save her people. Hosea kept pursuing his adulterous wife, at cost to his reputation and strain on the relationship because he loved her and loved God. Green asserts, “Loving someone with biblical love is not easy. It is choosing to give, serve, care, provide, and protect someone else even when suffering comes from her hand.”<sup>66</sup>

Husbands ought to take heed that they do not think more highly of themselves. There could be a temptation for a husband to believe that he is not *that bad*. When he starts comparing himself to other husbands who cheated on their wives, abused their wives, or abandoned their wives, he can start believing he does not need to change or work on any sinful patterns in his own life. Jones warns us: “The only thing worse than being greedy, unrighteous, an adulterer, or a tax collector is *being proud that you are not one*.”<sup>67</sup>

Although husbands have authority in their headship within the home, love presses them to be different from the world’s use of authority. In Matthew 20, Jesus is teaching his disciples how to lead and serve. He says, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you” (Matt 20:25-26).

Christ gives his own life as an example for what they need to do. Jesus said, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28). Köstenberger and Jones point out: “Husbands’ exercise of authority, in turn, must not be an arbitrary or abusive one, but should be motivated by love.”<sup>68</sup> Holmes gives further clarification to this authority and sacrifice: “Biblical headship is

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<sup>66</sup> Rob Green, *Tying the Knot: A Premarital Guide to a Strong and Lasting Marriage* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 58.

<sup>67</sup> Jones, Kellen, and Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, 166.

<sup>68</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *Marriage and the Family*, 35.

described as sacrificial servanthood, not unlimited authority (Mark 10:42-45). Let's not confuse terms—when a husband demands his own way or dominates his wife, we do not call this biblical headship, we call it what it is—selfishness and abuse of power.”<sup>69</sup>

The headship entails a God-given, limited authority that is used for servant-leadership. Grudem says, “The New Testament tells us, “*In Adam* all die” (1 Cor 15:22; cf. v. 49), and “Many died through *one man's* trespass” (Rom. 5:15; cf. vv. 12-21). This indicates that God had given Adam headship or leadership with respect to the human race, a role that was not given to Eve.”<sup>70</sup> Ultimately, a husband's authority was designed to mirror God's character.

The husband's headship needs to be sacrificial because he will be putting aside his own feelings, desires, and inclinations (at least temporarily) to love and serve his wife. The husband's love will not “insist on its own way.” John is explicit on what this love looks like: “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Leon Morris makes a keen observation about this passage in John 15: “It is important to remember that Jesus is not here comparing love for one's ‘friends’ to any other kind of love—whether for parents or spouse or children, or ‘neighbors’ (however defined), or for one's enemies—but simply making the point that there is no ‘greater’ expression of love than giving one's life for someone.”<sup>71</sup>

Although there is not a relationship conveyed between loving one's friends and anyone else, this type of love can be deeply experienced within the marriage context. Children of God are called to “deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus” (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). Denying oneself is a daily commitment to love

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<sup>69</sup> Holmes, *Counsel for Couples*, 180.

<sup>70</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 463.

<sup>71</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 353.

another. This is the type of love conveyed in Romans 5:8: “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

God did not wait until humans were perfect (because that would never happen without intervention from God himself); he initiated sacrificial love when people did not deserve it. Savage makes a key distinction: “There is another sense in which the roles of marriage differ. Love takes the initiative and submission responds to that initiative. Paul illustrates the difference by contrasting the roles of Christ and the church.”<sup>72</sup>

Jesus paid the ultimate cost—the greatest amount—for the good of his people, which, in the end, brings glory and honor to God. Douglas J. Moo notices the significance of Jesus’s dying for enemies as opposed to people we love or care for: “The main point of this verse is clear enough. Paul accentuates the love of God manifested in the cross of Christ by reminding us that the pinnacle of human love is the giving of one’s life for a person one is close to—a spouse, child, or combat buddy—whereas God sent his Son to die for people who hated him (v. 8).”<sup>73</sup>

When husbands emulate the love that Christ has for the church, this provides fertile soil for a marriage rooted in the gospel, bringing glory to God, and giving a testimony of God’s love for his people. Savage says, “It begins with the husband. When he sets the pace with a stroke of cruciform love, his wife responds in kind, and the marital boat moves forward to claim the most coveted victory of all—the prize of reflecting within marriage the glory of God.”<sup>74</sup> There are many instances where the wife has displayed Christ’s long-suffering patience, praying for her husband to be saved by God, but, when the husband is continually loving his wife, her ability to respond in kindness is dramatically enhanced.

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<sup>72</sup> Savage, *No Ordinary Marriage*, 89.

<sup>73</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 141.

<sup>74</sup> Savage, *No Ordinary Marriage*, 90.

One caution for husbands is to guard against sacrificing to the point where it is enabling certain behavior from his spouse. Vernick says, “It is never wise or godly to sacrifice our self in order to give our spouse more license to sin (gamble, abuse drugs, abuse us or our children, etc.).”<sup>75</sup> This could also be referring to wives, specifically sacrificing their time, energy, money, and more for their husbands, and they need to be aware of not allowing their husband to continue in sin, although it is not the wife’s responsibility that he is sinning; it is his own choice.

Another word of warning is thinking correctly about what sacrificial love is; if someone has not been taught what biblical sacrificial love really looks like, he could have a completely distorted picture of how marriage can be Christ-exalting. Holmes observes through his own ministry experience that people have a misunderstanding about sacrificial love: “I’ve had husbands and wives both tell me that sacrificial love—in their understanding—means letting their spouse do whatever they want, becoming a doormat to their spouse’s desires.”<sup>76</sup> Sacrificial love is not being a doormat; it is the opposite of being taken advantage of in this way. Sacrificial love is an intentional humbling and giving of oneself for the betterment of his spouse for the glory of God. Tripp says, “When it comes to love, we have two problems. First, there are many things we call love that simply do not rise to the level of what love is. And we lack a clear definition of what love is and what love does.”<sup>77</sup> The aim of this paper and project is to help husbands know and observe what God has told husbands to do.

Practical ways that husbands can show sacrificial love is by daily incorporating servant-leadership, gentleness, and humility into acts of kindness for the benefit of the other person without expecting anything in return and relying on the power of the Holy

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<sup>75</sup> Vernick, *How to Act Right*, 155.

<sup>76</sup> Holmes, *Counsel for Couples*, 89-90.

<sup>77</sup> Tripp, *Realities of Marriage*, 168.



Spirit. He will anticipate the needs of his wife and act on them. If he only has good intentions of loving his wife, he needs to take it a step further and do it.

### **Conclusion**

Husbands will live out the command of being a servant-leader in marriage by displaying humility, gentleness, and sacrificial love. The husband will demonstrate humility, gentleness, and sacrificial love together for the good of his wife. This will conform to how Christ loves and leads the church. Marriage is not an end in itself; it was made to give glory to God and show his multi-faceted wisdom and grace. The fruit of the Spirit will be evident in the lives of husbands who follow Christ, and this will bring honor, glory, and praise to God.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of this project was to strengthen marriages within the membership of Bethel Evangelical Free Church in Fairmont, Minnesota, specifically addressing husbands and their role in a God-honoring marriage using a biblical counseling framework. The first goal of this project was to assess men's understanding of a God-honoring marriage. The second goal of this project was to develop an eight-session curriculum for a weekend seminar that would equip men to love, lead, and serve their wives. The curriculum covered biblical foundations for marriage, such as God's original design, servant-leadership, and sacrificial love. Originally, the curriculum had five sessions, but it turned into an eight-session curriculum with seven out of the eight sessions covering new material. The last session was review and reflection. The third goal of this project was to increase men's knowledge of a God-honoring marriage. In order to fulfill the required completion of these three goals, a specific research methodology had been carefully laid out.

#### **Development Process for Project Preparation**

At first, I had chosen to create a five-session curriculum for a weekend seminar given to husbands. As I was making the outline for the seminar, and, after a conversation with my supervisor, I realized that a five-session seminar was not going to be enough. This led to the development of eight sessions. The last of the eight sessions was a conclusion and reflection time, so the majority of the content resided in sessions 1-7. The section below details the content and development of the eight sessions in the marriage seminar.

## **Preparation for the Project**

One of the first tasks in the project entailed coming up with a name for the seminar. I went through many iterations before landing on the final title: “Servant-Leadership in Marriage: Husbands Learning to Lead Like Christ.” There were many elements in the title that I wanted to capture.

First, the foundation of the seminar and the content centered on Christ. I did not promise husbands that they would somehow become a super Christian right after the seminar, and I did not imply that the husband (student/servant) was greater than Christ (teacher/master). Therefore, the title culminated with Christ at the end, and the husband can be like Christ.

Second, I gave the impression of a process by using the term “learning.” Because change is a process that takes time, effort, progress, setbacks, and so forth, I gave the connotation of a lifelong learning process to be molded into the image of Christ. Also, I did not give the appearance as though I had arrived at being a perfect Christlike husband because I am still learning how to become more like Christ. When I taught the material, I was also speaking into my own life.

Third, because this seminar was aimed at husbands specifically, I used the term, “husbands,” to describe who the seminar would be speaking to and who should come. I had people ask if others could attend the seminar. Although they could learn, and the seminar would be beneficial for those who are single or engaged, the focus of the seminar was on those men who were already married. Goal 1 indicated that I needed to have at least twelve married men to participate in the seminar to be successful. If others would have joined, the participation would not have counted toward goal 1; however, as stated before, they would still have been able to hear God’s Word taught in regard to servant-leadership within marriage. The result was that only married men attended the seminar.

Fourth, the main theme throughout the seminar was service, just as Christ did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. I did not focus only on service but also leadership from the man. I addressed the questions: How does the leader serve his wife? And how does the husband love his wife as Christ loves the church?

Once the title became clear, then the work began to decipher how many sessions there should be and the content of each session. In a broad sense, I covered the foundation of marriage because our culture (and the world in general) has confused the beginning, meaning, and basis for marriage. This became session 1. Next, I specifically addressed the servant-leadership aspect of marriage for the husband using Old Testament and New Testament examples. I covered Adam to Jesus Christ as the servant-leader in session 2.

Sessions 3-5 came from previous research found in chapters 2-3 of this paper. Because Christ described himself as gentle and humble and the husband is supposed to be like Christ, sessions 3-4 were on gentleness and humility. Session 5 covered sacrificial love, which Christ displayed by coming to earth, living a sinless life, and dying on the cross, and rising to eternal life.

Session 6 revolved around popular views on love. I added this session in response to my supervisor's suggestion. This provided clarity on what we might intuitively believe about love because of our cultural expectations and familial upbringing.

Next, in light of the biblical counseling framework, I provided a session that gave husbands practical application about temptations, sin, forgiveness, and restoration. The common response to sin is to blame-shift, which we see goes back to the garden of Eden, and I taught the husbands that sin comes out of our heart, and we need to address our issues through a biblical lens and speak the truth to one another in love. I encouraged

them to turn to Scripture during times of need, not only getting correction but also giving advice and direction to other people. This was one of the questions listed in the BFMS (pre-seminary survey and post-seminar survey).

Finally, I gave time for the men to digest the material and think about the seminar. I also desired to have time to explain the concepts that were covered during the day. So, the final session brought the main issues back to the forefront and provided time for self-reflection. The participants also filled out the BFMS at the end of the session.<sup>1</sup>

Once the facility was reserved and the date was set, the director of men's ministry, who is also an elder, volunteered to send out an email advertising the seminar to the distribution list on file with the men's ministry. I also sent an email with the same information to our Sunday school class. Next, I sent text messages inviting the men who were a part of a Bible Study earlier in the year (fourteen guys). Finally, I sent personal text messages to various men throughout the week before the seminar to follow-up and see if they were coming to the seminar.

The culmination of the eight sessions as well as the consent to participate, pre-seminar survey, and post-seminar survey were contained in a 33-page workbook that I had printed at Minute Man Press the day before the seminar. I picked up and proofread the workbooks to ensure everything was in order. A copy of the workbook is found in appendix 3.

### **Implementing the Curriculum: Weekend Seminar**

The weekend seminar started with set-up and refreshments. The participants filed into the room until shortly after 9:00 a.m. I kicked off the seminar with prayer.

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1.

## Session 1

The first session began with a welcome and short introduction. I then quickly guided the participants to page 2 of the workbook and asked them to sign the participation agreement for the project. After they finished signing page 2, I directed their attention to page 4 to fill out the BFMS pre-seminar survey and waited until it looked as if most of the men had completed the BFMS to move onto the content within session 1. The results from the BFMS pre-seminar survey are as follows:

Table 1. BFMS pre-seminar survey results

Survey Question	Mean
3. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles for communication in marriage?	6.5/10
4. How well do you think you understand the biblical role of the husband?	7.2/10
5. How well do you think you understand the biblical role of the wife?	6.9/10
6. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning love in marriage?	6.9/10
7. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning forgiveness in the marriage?	7.4/10
8. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning conflict resolution in the marriage?	6.6/10
9. How confident would you be in ministering (counseling) with someone who is experiencing marital problems or issues?	5.2/10
10. How great do you believe is the need for mentoring in a marriage?	8.8/10

I used the workbook which allowed everyone to follow along, and I talked about how, by God's grace, He saved me at a very young age. The Lord mercifully kept

me from going through a rebellious stint or anything of that nature but rather, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has been maturing my faith since I was seven. I had an intentional Christian education from kindergarten through my doctorate, yet everyone has their own struggles with sin. I noted how my sin might not have been overt behaviors but rather opinions or thoughts rooted in my heart. I learned most of my own sin tendencies by taking biblical counseling courses and going through the doctoral program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In most of the sessions, I started with a personal story that was an example of what not to do. The first session was titled, “Biblical Foundations of Marriage: From Genesis to Revelation.” My personal story revolved around my concept of marriage and what being in love meant when I got married at the age of twenty. I knew biblical concepts, and I had good premarital counseling; however, I did not grasp what servant-leadership was, how love can change over time, and how costly love can be.

This session started with God’s covenant with his people, Israel. God was their husband. In Jeremiah 31, God describes this covenant with his people and the new covenant that he was going to make. The concept and realization of marriage is based off of God’s marriage to his people. I started with looking at Adam before the fall. He was made in the image of God (Gen 1:27); he was one flesh with Eve (Gen 2:24); and he was given dominion over creation as a servant-leader (Gen 1:26, 28).

I then moved into the New Testament foundation of marriage which is Christ and the church. Adam was an imperfect husband who pointed to the perfect husband: Christ (Eph 5:29-32). Finally, I ended the session with the culmination of the marriage of the Lamb and his bride at the end of the age. This is the eternal marriage of Christ and the church because in the new heavens and new earth people are neither married nor given in marriage (Mark 12:25) but rather Christ has an eternal covenant keeping relationship.

I also ended the sessions with questions. We either discussed the questions, or we took time to reflect on the questions and wrote down personal applications to those questions. The questions in the first session were as follows: (1) What is marriage? (2) Why did God design marriage? and (3) How does marriage mirror Christ's relationship with the church? The time of session 1 was closer to 40 minutes instead of 30 minutes.

## **Session 2**

The second session was titled, "Servant-Leadership: Rooted in Jesus Christ." I started session 2 with a story about how not to display servant-leadership. The example included how I was not forthright with my wife on how much travel a new job entailed, and, after many attempts from my wife to get to the truth, I finally came forth with the agreed upon amount. This did not serve my wife, even though I had used the excuse that I needed the job to provide for the family, and lying to my wife caused my leadership abilities to come into question. It has taken many years to repair what a lie can do.

Next, I led the participants through the Old Testament foundation of servant-leadership, starting with Adam. In Genesis 2:15, God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Another translation for "work" is to "serve." Also, because Adam was made first, was given the command, and named all of the creatures, he had a leadership role. I moved over to the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 11:3 to discuss the meaning of "head." I noted that the most common interpretation is "authority over" instead of "source." Although the man has a headship role within marriage, I stressed the servant nature of the authority. First Corinthians 11:3 states, "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." The man also has someone in authority over him: Christ. The husband depends on Christ, and he has to answer to Christ for what he has done. The husband also needs to become like Christ by emulating Christ's love. In Ephesians 5:23, it says, "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.” The husband not only should be like Christ, but he also should model the relationship as Christ has with the church.

At this point in the session, I taught about the role of the wife. She was also made in the image of God; she is a co-heir to eternal life; she is the man’s helper; and she has the mandate to submit to the husband. I also noted that the Holy Spirit was called a “Helper” in John 14:26. I tried to define what submission looked like and what it was not. The wife should never voluntarily sin or follow her husband into sin. They have equal value in the sight of God.

Next, I expanded on servant-leadership by giving the example of how Christ served his disciples by washing their feet. Then, I gave eight practical ways that a husband can exhibit servant-leadership: (1) reading God’s Word daily and reading Scripture *with* his wife, (2) praying for his wife, praying *with* his wife, and leading his family in prayer, (3) showing his family what a relationship with Christ looks like, (4) leading his family in worship, (5) actively being involved in fellowship within the church body, (6) providing for his family’s physical needs for food, clothing, shelter, and protection, (7) showing his wife honor (words and deeds), and (8) asking for forgiveness when he sins and repenting of those sins.

I went through all eight ways to show servant-leadership. I wanted to focus on the pursuit of Christ in his daily life because otherwise his efforts are in vain. I reviewed how a husband can use number 6 (providing for the family) as a justification to neglect leading his family in God’s Word and prayer, specifically, his wife. Being a servant-leader does not mean that he is always right; in fact, he will be wrong many times, but his character will be tested to see if he will be open to input, and, if he sins, confess and repent.

I ended the session with three questions: (1) How can I use my leadership role to serve my wife? (2) When was the last time I thought about how to lead my wife,

pointing her to Christ? and (3) What do I need to change today, so I can serve my wife in a God-honoring way? The leadership role involves taking initiative in these areas. He is commanded to nourish and cherish his wife as Christ does the church. I stressed that a husband needs to take the time to think about and strategize how to foster his wife's spiritual growth. What ways can he give her time to read God's Word, pray, be involved in a small group, and serve the church in other areas?

### **Session 3**

The third session was titled, "Approach: Gentleness—The Virtue of Christ." I took a break between sessions 2 and 3, so the men could grab something to drink, use the restroom, and get a snack. They all seemed very engaged and started conversations among themselves. I also had a participant ask me a few clarifying questions about the roles of a husband and wife. I was running about half an hour behind schedule at this point.

Session 3 started with my personal story of unknowingly teaching my wife how to argue. Again, this is the opposite of how a husband should be, which is the antithesis of gentleness. I described a tendency to be upset when I had to redo something two or three times. I moved into the biblical foundation of gentleness found in Galatians 5:22-24; gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit. God's people will be marked by gentleness. Gentleness can also mean a "mildness," and the same Greek word is found in Matthew 5:5: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." The world sees gentleness as weakness, but that is not the definition of gentleness.

I used an unlikely biblical figure to model gentleness: King David. I referenced an article from David Mathis,<sup>2</sup> which described David as one who killed lions and bears (1 Sam 17:34-36), defeated a giant, Goliath, and cut off his head with a massive sword (1

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<sup>2</sup> David Mathis, "Gentleness Made Him Great: Learning from the Strongest of Men," *Desiring God* (blog), July 1, 2023, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/gentleness-made-him-great>.

Sam 17:51), and dominated all his foes: “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam 18:7). Yet, because David had the strength, he was able to fully demonstrate what gentleness truly is. In 2 Samuel 18:5, David wanted his men to deal gently with his rebel son, Absalom. Also, we see in 2 Samuel 3:38-39, David showed kindness and gentleness to the house of Saul when he could have swiftly ended all relations. David was gentle, not weak.

Jesus perfectly displayed gentleness. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus self-describes his inner man: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” I highlighted the fact that Jesus called himself gentle, and we ought to be gentle like him. Christ has all the power, dominion, and authority, yet he perfectly demonstrates his gentleness.

The husband is called to live with his wife in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel (1 Pet 3:7). I posed the question from the husband’s point of view: Isn’t the wife supposed to honor the husband? One way of showing this honor to his wife is by being gentle. I mentioned 2 Timothy 2:24-26, which talks about how Christians are commanded to correct their opponents with gentleness. This takes self-control, yet this is how Christ treats us.

I gave seven practical ways that husbands can approach their marriage with gentleness: (1) speaking words of life-giving encouragement, (2) protecting his wife and using his strength for guarding his wife from danger, (3) responding kindly during a disagreement, (4) exhibiting patience, especially in stressful situations, (5) listening to her voice with patience, (6) caring for her when she is sick, and (7) being “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exod 34:6b).

I emphasized that the tone of voice matters. The husband can be encouraging with his words and his expressions. I noted that husbands are given strength for protection, and he must never use physical force against his wife. In a marriage where the

wife is physically abusive, the husband needs to seek help from others. Gentleness does not come naturally to most men, and listening, caring, and being slow to anger are all high callings of gentleness.

Finally, I ended session 3 with four questions: (1) What ways have I not been gentle to my wife? (2) What ways have I shown gentleness to my wife? (3) What were my pre-conceived notions of gentleness? and (4) Is there a certain occasion that continues to bring out irritability within me, or is there a recurring theme which I am especially susceptible to? I was trying to have the men identify heart issues, so they could address them biblically. Session 7 was designed to go deeper into that topic.

#### **Session 4**

Session 4 was titled, “Attitude: Humility—The Posture of Christ.” I started the session with another personal story where I believed that I deserved my sleep. This belief was held when our firstborn was up at all times during the night. My wife would get up with him every night, and I did not expect to help out in any way. Thirteen months passed until I thought I might be willing to help with that task. I realized that I did not want to humble myself to help in this way. I briefly talked about how husbands do not want to acknowledge any wrongdoing or neglect to ask for forgiveness. Humility will be needed for both.

The biblical foundation for humility is realized in Christ Jesus himself. I used Philippians 2:3-8 to drive home the point of Christ’s humility; he came from heaven, became a human servant, and humbled himself by being obedient to the point of death on a cross. Jesus calls us to take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23). The husband does not get a vacation from dying to self and walking humbly with his God (Mic 6:8).

I used two other examples of people found in Scripture who exemplified humility. The first person was Moses. In Numbers 12:3, it says, “Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.” The world says

that the leader needs to be confident, proud, bold, and have many followers. Moses was hesitant and could not speak well, but he relied on God and obeyed him.

The next example of humility from the New Testament was Mary, the mother of Jesus. In Luke 1:46-49, Mary acknowledges her humble estate. God uses people who walk humbly with him. I noted that when someone is humble, he can magnify the Lord, rejoice in God, is blessed, and can glorify God for who he is and what he has done.

Finally, Jesus Christ described himself as “lowly in heart” (Matt 11:29). Christ is the source, foundation, sustainer, and perfect example of humility. I used Ephesians 4:1-3 to show that Paul exhorted his readers to live with humility and gentleness. The Christ-follower is called to be both (and many other things), especially husbands who have the responsibility to love his wife as Christ loves the church. I closed session 4 with seven practical ways that a husband can exhibit humility in marriage and four reflection questions. The practical ways of displaying humility were (1) admitting one’s own error first, (2) asking for forgiveness first, (3) showing small acts of kindness, (4) taking the plank out of one’s own eye first, (5) initiating to work on the harder tasks first, (6) looking to her interests and concerns first (serving), and (7) learning to live with one’s wife according to knowledge. The husband should have an attitude or mindset of a servant, obedient to God, thinking that others are more important (in a healthy way). I wanted to zero in on the husband initiating his own heart introspection and repentance, as well as extending forgiveness.

The four reflection questions included: (1) What does it mean to be a leader yet be humble? (2) What ways have I shown humility toward my wife? (3) How did Jesus give us an example of humility? and (4) Why is it important that I have an attitude of humility in marriage? I explained the process of asking for forgiveness. People tend to think that they have asked for forgiveness when they have not, so I described the process

of specifically addressing the sin, impact, and asking for forgiveness, as well as repenting and showing a change.

## **Session 5**

Session 5 was titled, “Action: Sacrificial Love—The Work of Christ.” I began the session by giving a brief description of the type of love that I am referring to—something that is costly, hard, and most likely inefficient and inconvenient. I gave a personal story of getting my wife a cup of water after getting into bed at the end of a long, hard day. Am I willing to serve her in the moment?

The biblical foundation of love starts with God. And God has commanded that his people love him and others, which is the first and second greatest commandments. God loved the world and gave his Son (John 3:16); Christ loved us and gave himself up as an offering and sacrifice to God (Eph 5:2). Love entails giving something valuable that is costly and is considered a sacrifice. God commands that we love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34). Love encompasses feeling, thought, and action (Matt 22:36-39). I specifically addressed the action of love in this session.

Next, I reviewed four words for love in Greek, noting that there were many other words that were used in the Greek culture. The four words were eros, storge, phileo, and agape. Eros is not used in the New Testament but encompasses romantic-type love. storge is a familial love, and phileo is a friendship love. Finally, agape love is an unconditional love and is self-giving. I also remarked that phileo and agape were used interchangeably at times in the New Testament, so the nuances might not be as pronounced as some would tend to argue.

Next, we saw how Christ perfectly acted out this self-giving love. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:7-8). Husbands can fall into the temptation of reasoning they need to wait until their wife does something first before they can extend love. I noted Christ’s mission to serve, not be served, and give his life as a ransom for

many (Mark 10:45). Also, in John 13, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. I mentioned that this service includes giving of self and giving by doing hard things.

I had a few other points in this session. First, love can change over time: with or without kids, healthy or sick, rich or poor, young or old, through hardship or ease. I said that it sounds like marriage vows. Love never ends. Second, Christ does not take a day off; he does not take a break from providing and loving his church. Finally, because the greatest commandment is to love God first, a husband's relationship with Christ is essential. How is the husband's relationship to Christ? Does he have a growing relationship with his Savior? I addressed this in session 7 with the temptation of unbelief. Perhaps, the husband thinks he knows Christ but does not.

I illustrated the point that we should not sacrifice to the point of endorsing or allowing our spouse to sin. Each person is responsible for his or her own thoughts and actions, but it will take wisdom when dealing with a spouse who has a gambling addiction, abuses drugs, abuses the husband or children, etc. He will need to exercise his leadership and get help from others.

I ended this session with practical ways of showing sacrificial love, although I was not as specific as the other sessions because the way I show love to my spouse might not mean the same thing to someone else's spouse, or rather, I might find something costly or difficult to do, but another person might not. The four ways that I spelled out were (1) to daily incorporating servant-leadership, gentleness, and humility into acts of kindness for the benefit of the other person without expecting anything in return and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, (2) anticipate concerns, desires, and needs of his wife and act on them, (3) 1 Corinthians 13, "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all

things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things,” and (4) say, “I love you” every day.

I told the group of men that many times we have good intentions, and we think that we ought to do something that is good. We just need to act on it! We do not do this with our own strength but through the strength that God’s supplies. I encouraged them not just to react but to anticipate. Also, love for God will then naturally flow to love for others, even though it is not easy at times. I finished the session with four questions: (1) When was the last time you thought about how you could sacrificially love your wife? (2) What were the circumstances that proved to be difficult to love? (3) How do forgiveness and love go hand-in-hand? and (4) How can we spur one another on to love and good deeds?

## **Session 6**

The sixth session was titled, “Popular Views on Love in Marriage: Christian and Secular.” This session started differently than the other sessions because I did not start off with a personal story. I used five sources on love. The first book that I discussed was *The 5 Love Languages* by Gary Chapman.<sup>3</sup> For each of the books examined in session 6, I gave positive points and negative aspects to the resource. One of the main ideas that I gave to the men was that our perception and opinion about love has been molded and affected in some way by our culture, and these five books represented different views on love. We need to use God’s Word as our source of truth and the pattern for love. In *The 5 Love Languages*, the positive points included: (1) It gave us ideas on how to relate better to people we love, and (2) your marriage can improve if these ideas were implemented. It was also helpful that a Christian is the author. The negative aspects included: (1) “Need” language that can cause blame-shifting, (2)

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<sup>3</sup> Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts* (Chicago: Northfield, 2010), 1.



people's empty love tank is the real problem, (3) over emphasis on the need to feel loved, and (4) "misbehavior" grows out of empty love tanks instead of the heart.

The second book examined was *Love and Respect* by Emerson Eggerichs.<sup>4</sup> I gave positive points that he used Scripture as his thesis: Ephesians 5:33. He said that wives should respect their husbands, and husbands should love their wives. The negative points come from his focus on the wife. The wife is the initiator of respect, which will produce the love from her husband. Christ is the initiator and self-giver; the husband ought to be the initiator of love. He also used need-based language that the Bible does not embody.

The third book that I talked about was *Real Love* by Greg Baer.<sup>5</sup> A positive point was that people should address problems from their childhood, and he has a sincere desire to help people to have loving relationships. The downside was that his definition of love was skewed. Also, he says that the greatest human need is to be happy instead of the greatest human need being Jesus. He pinned most of people's problems and the inability to love on not getting enough unconditional love as children. If empty and afraid, then people do not have the capacity to be happy or to love.

The fourth book was *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* by John Gottman and Nan Silver.<sup>6</sup> The seven principles included: enhance your love maps, build fondness and admiration, turn toward each other, let your partner influence you, solve the solvable problems, manage perpetual problems, and create shared meaning. A few positive points were the fact that Gottman and Silver wanted people to have happy marriages and to set priorities on issues, not blowing small things out of proportion. Also,

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<sup>4</sup> Emerson Eggerichs, *Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Greg Baer, *Real Love: The Truth about Finding Unconditional Love and Fulfilling Relationships* (New York: Gotham Books, 2003), 1.

<sup>6</sup> John Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 1.

mutual respect and enjoyment sounds a lot like humility. A few negative aspects included their premise for happy marriages, namely they believe that happy marriages are based on a deep friendship, not on Christ. Their approach was purely scientifically driven and involves behavioral modification toward one another. The sense of purpose is unclear, and they have no interest in God.

Finally, the last book mentioned was *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* written by John Gray.<sup>7</sup> This book has been around a long time, and his main idea is to deal with the differences between men and women. A positive point was to be patient with the differences. Negative points included no reference to God, Christ, or the gospel; he does not guarantee that love will last, is very scientific-driven, and believes that just an understanding of each other will lead to peace.

The session ended with three questions given to the group: (1) How have these popular views on love shaped your own opinion? (2) What is a biblical response to these popular views on love? and (3) Are there any views on love that you need to change? I highlighted that we have been influenced in some way by the culture, by our family upbringing, and by what we see and hear. I continued to point them to the Bible for truth.

## **Session 7**

Session 7 was titled, “Common Temptations for Husbands.” I started this session with a personal story about selfishness, seeing something that needs to be done and ignoring it, or being fearful and anxious about the future and not acting on it. I used Scripture references to show where temptations come from: the heart and Satan (Matt 15:19; 1 Thess 3:5; Jas 1:13-15; 4:1-3).

I discussed five common temptations for husbands. The first temptation was selfishness. I showed the men that this sin started in the garden of Eden, where the

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1. <sup>7</sup> John Gray, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992),

woman desired to be wise and took the fruit and ate (Gen 3:6), and the Bible calls us to “do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit” (Phil 2:3a). I listed examples of being selfish: (1) desiring to be first, (2) not caring about our spouse’s concerns, (3) wanting to please oneself, (4) taking things first, serving second (if at all), and (5) always needing to be right, thinking opinion is always best, and desiring to win every argument. We are called to be loving instead of selfish.

The second common temptation was anger. I described anger as irritability, frustration, annoyance, etc. We see this anger in Cain (Gen 4:5) before he kills his brother. We are also exhorted to be slow to anger for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God (Jas 1:19-20). Although Psalm 4:4 says to “be angry and do not sin,” we must not think that anger is something to cultivate or cheer. We are called to be self-controlled and gentle instead of angry.

The third temptation was fear. Adam hid himself in fear (Gen 3:10). Three ways that fear can be manifested in the life of a husband are feeling inadequate, afraid of truth being exposed, while feeling guilt and shame, and also lacking courage or leadership as the head of the wife. We are called to love instead of fear (1 John 4:18).

The fourth temptation involved sexual sins (1 Thess 4:3). Sometimes men forget how devastating sexual sins can be, so I gave the example found in 1 Corinthians 10:8: “We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.” God does not take sin lightly; he does not take sexual sin lightly. I gave five examples of sexual sins: lust of the eyes, pornography, adultery, fantasy, and any other form of physical/mental sexual sins. Intimacy with their wife will be affected, and it will take time to heal and to trust again.

The fifth temptation noted was unbelief. The serpent in the garden questioned God’s command (Gen 3:1), ultimately convincing Adam and Eve not to believe God. In Romans 11:20, the Israelites “were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand

fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.” The husband could have a lack of zeal for the Lord, or he could simply not believe in the promises of God (or Scripture in general). This is a lack of spiritual leadership. The husband needs to look to Christ, who is his head. We will all be tempted; Jesus was tempted (but without sin). I gave 1 Corinthians 10:13 as an encouragement to the husbands that God will not let them be tempted beyond what they can bear, but that he will provide a way of escape, so that they may be able to endure it.

I finished the session by stating four questions: (1) Is there one particular temptation that keeps recurring? (2) What are radical steps that can be taken during temptation? (3) Do you talk to your spouse about being tempted? Why or why not? (4) Can you name one or two people that you would trust telling your temptations?

### **Session 8**

The final session was titled, “Reflection/Application.” During this time, we summarized the learning from the day; I exhorted the men to rely on Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17) and their ability to help one another. I had four main sections of review. The first section was reflection. The men wrote down one or two things they wanted to do differently starting today. The second section was a recap of biblical roles of husband and wife. The third section was a summary of love, forgiveness, and conflict resolution. Finally, the fourth section was an abridgment of gentleness, humility, love, and communication within marriage. We ended our time with the men taking the BFMS post-seminar survey. I dismissed the participants shortly after 2:00 p.m. The results from the post-seminar survey are found in table 2.

Table 2. BFMS post-seminar survey results

Survey Question	Mean
3. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles for communication in marriage?	8.3/10
4. How well do you think you understand the biblical role of the husband?	8.5/10
5. How well do you think you understand the biblical role of the wife?	8.1/10
6. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning love in marriage?	8.5/10
7. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning forgiveness in the marriage?	8.7/10
8. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning conflict resolution in the marriage?	8.2/10
9. How confident would you be in ministering (counseling) with someone who is experiencing marital problems or issues?	6.8/10
10. How great do you believe is the need for mentoring in a marriage?	9.5/10

I used a t-test: paired two sample for means to show that any increase in knowledge was statistically significant. If the p value was  $<.05$ , then it would show that the results were not an accident or by chance, that there was a change. After reviewing the results in table 3 (see below), the teaching of servant-leadership in marriage to the participants made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of their knowledge ( $t_{(12)} = -5.905$ ,  $p < .00007$ ).

Table 3. T-test results for paired two sample for means

<i>Detail</i>	<i>Pre-seminar survey</i>	<i>Post-seminar survey</i>
Mean	55.53846154	66.61538462
Variance	68.1025641	14.08974359
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	0.588327277	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	12	
t Stat	-5.90507876	
P(T<=t) one-tail	3.59799E-05	
t Critical one-tail	1.782287556	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00007195	
t Critical two-tail	2.17881283	

I enjoyed both the preparation of the seminar and the delivery. I received warm feedback verbally, and the results of the BFMS post-seminar survey showed that the men learned beneficial biblical truths during the seminar. Chapter 5 will discuss the analysis and evaluation of the project, strengths, weaknesses, theological and personal reflections, as well as future plans.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROJECT EVALUATION

The final chapter of this paper will discuss the evaluation of the project. First, the purpose of this project will be examined to see if the outcome aligns with the proposed purpose. Second, the goals will be assessed to see if they were successfully met. Third, I will talk about the strengths of the project during the preparation, presentation, and follow-up. Fourth, I will note the weaknesses I observed with the project. Fifth, I will have a section that judges what I would do differently if I were to implement a similar project. Sixth, I will take time to reflect both theologically and personally on how the project has impacted me, and I will end with the conclusion.

#### **Evaluation of Project Purpose**

I believe that the purpose of this project, which was to strengthen marriages within the membership of Bethel Evangelical Free Church in Fairmont, Minnesota, specifically addressing husbands and their role in a God-honoring marriage using a biblical counseling framework, was successfully completed through the preparation and presentation of the seminar. The validity of the evaluation will be reviewed in the next section by examining each of the three goals that supported the consummation of the project purpose.

#### **Evaluation of Project Goals**

This section will evaluate the results of each of the three goals for the project. If the three goals are successfully met, then the project purpose will be considered completed. I believe that I have successfully accomplished the purpose for this project

because all three goals were at or beyond the expected outcome. I will begin by assessing the first goal in the project.

### **Goal 1**

The first goal of this project was to gather men's understanding of a God-honoring marriage. This goal was measured by administering a Biblical Foundation of Marriage Survey to at least twelve men who are married.<sup>1</sup> This goal was considered successfully met if twelve men completed the BFMS. The BFMS was administered to thirteen men before the seminar, and they completed the required pre-seminar survey. Therefore, goal 1 was successfully completed because the required number of men took the pre-seminar survey to provide a baseline at the outset of the study.

### **Goal 2**

The second goal of this project was to develop an eight-session curriculum for a weekend seminar that would equip men to love, lead, and serve their wives. The curriculum covered biblical foundations for marriage, such as God's original design, servant-leadership, and sacrificial love. The curriculum covered typical issues that arise in marriage and how to resolve them.

This goal was measured by an expert panel that employed a rubric to evaluate the overall biblical accuracy, applicability, and teaching methodology of the curriculum.<sup>2</sup> This goal was successfully met because a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. The material did not need to be revised because all the evaluations passed the 90 percent benchmark on the first assessment.

The initial expert panel included four men but then one more person was added. The first person is an associate pastor and teacher, who has almost finished his

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 2.



DEdMin in Biblical Counseling from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; however, he was unable to send back an evaluation. He referred me to another elder at his church, who is the second person on the panel. The second person is ACBC certified, an elder at the Cross Church in Pensacola, Florida, and is working toward completing his Master of Divinity degree. The third person is a professor at ProMETA and holds a DMin from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; he was a missionary for fourteen years in Venezuela. The fourth person is our senior pastor and holds a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary. The fifth person holds a DMin from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and spent over thirty years as a missionary in China. I did not hear back from one of the five panel experts.

### **Goal 3**

The third goal of this project was to increase men's knowledge of a God-honoring marriage. The BFMS was administered after the seminar and was compared with the pre-seminar survey results. This goal was to be considered successfully met when the t-test samples showed a statistically positive difference between the pre-seminar survey and post-seminar survey results.

As seen in chapter 4, the t-test results did prove a statistically positive difference between the pre-seminar survey and post-seminar survey results. If the p value was  $<.05$ , then it would show that the results were not an accident or by chance that there was a change. The p value was  $<.00007$ , which is significantly lower than  $.05$ . I can be certain that the post-seminar survey results were a direct result of having learned content from the seminar.

The specific t-test results are as follows:  $(t_{(12)} = -5.905, p < .00007)$ ; therefore, the teaching of servant-leadership in marriage to the participants made a statistically

significant difference resulting in the increase of their knowledge.<sup>3</sup> I have included a graph in figure 1 that shows the growth percentage between the pre-seminar survey and post-seminar survey averages for each participant.

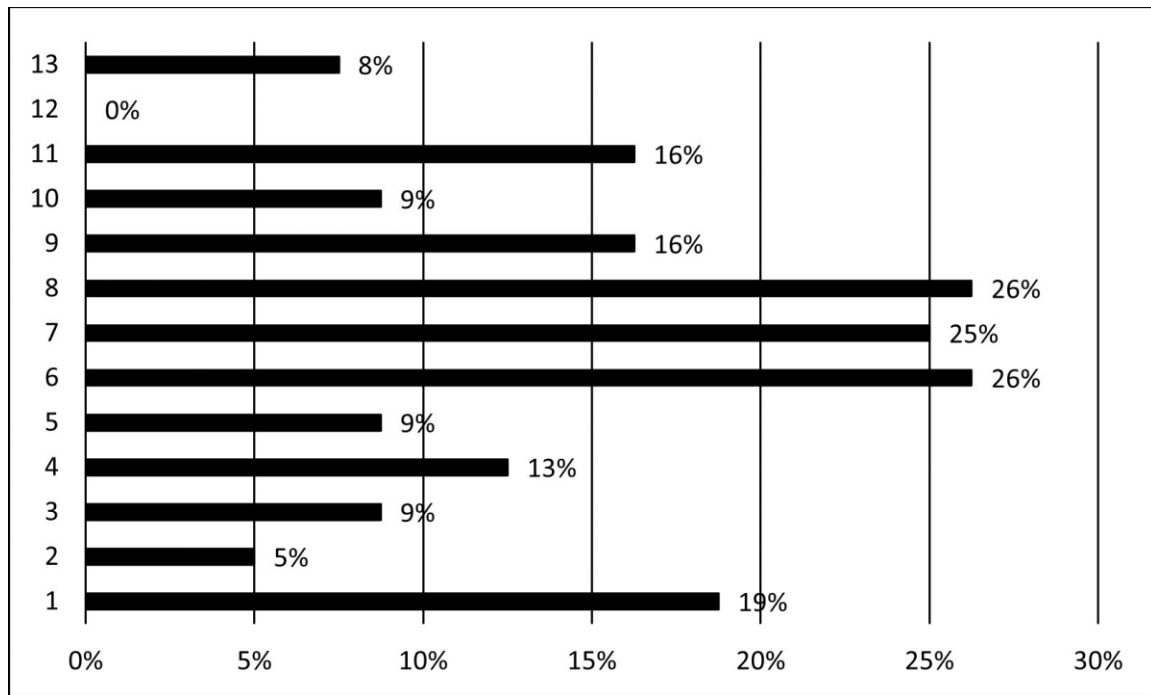


Figure 1. Individual growth percentage

I will examine the lowest and highest scores in the pre-seminar survey and post-seminar survey, as well as analyzing the highest growth area. The lowest pre-seminar survey score was question 9: How confident would you be in ministering (counseling) with someone who is experiencing marital problems or issues? The average score was 5.2 out of 10. The highest pre-seminar survey score was question 10: How great do you believe is the need for mentoring in a marriage? The average score was 8.8

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<sup>3</sup> Note: There was one participant who scored himself 8 out of 10 on all questions both on the pre-seminar survey and post-seminar survey. In Figure 1, the participant is number 12.

out of 10. The lowest post-seminar survey score was question 9 as well, which was 6.8 out of 10, and the highest post-seminar survey score was question 10, too, which was 9.5 out of 10. The second highest post-seminar survey score was question 7: How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning forgiveness in the marriage? The average score was 8.7 out of 10. The largest increase in percentage growth was question 3: How well do you think you understand the biblical principles for communication in marriage? The knowledge on question 3 increased by 18 percent. The lowest increase in percentage growth was question 9 at 8 percent. The total average increase in knowledge growth for all questions came in at 14 percent.

I have concluded that the men who came to the seminar did not have a high view of their own abilities to counsel someone else. I speculate that this could be because of many different reasons: (1) they do not know Scripture very well to be able to use it in a counseling opportunity, (2) they have never been in a formal situation where they have to counsel, (3) they did not know what counseling actually entailed, (4) they had a negative experience trying to counsel someone with Scripture, (5) they had a negative experience receiving counseling, (6) they have a timid approach in spiritual matters, or (7) they have another unknown reason. Whatever the case, question nine proved to be the lowest starting point and the lowest ending point.

Although the participants did not believe they had sufficient abilities to counsel, they realized the importance of mentoring within marriage. This would include either formal or informal counseling. Question 10 ranked highest in the pre-seminar survey and post-seminar survey, receiving a 9.5 out of 10, which was .8 higher average than the next highest score (9.19 percent higher); I should have had a follow-up question to ask about their willingness to pursue a mentorship or to become a mentor. The high score on this subject highlights the fact that people value relationships with older, wiser individuals who are further along in their faith.

The highest growth percentage on question three indicates that the men learned more ways to communicate with a biblical view in mind. The application questions were aimed at helping them think about how they normally communicate with their wives and any changes that might need to take place. Improving in communication could help many areas of their marriages.

### **Strengths of the Project**

There are multiple strengths to this project. The first strength can be seen by the overall interest within the men's ministry at Bethel Evangelical Free Church. I had many men before and after the project indicate that they wanted to be a part of a seminar like this one. I am in the planning stages of doing another seminar with the same material in order to give an opportunity to others who were not able to make it.

The second strength to the project was the focus on Jesus Christ being the foundation for marriage, manhood, and godliness. The project centered around Jesus and his servant-leadership to the church. Jesus Christ has all authority, dominion, and power, yet he displays gentleness with perfection. He is ruler over all yet humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on the cross. He gave his life as a ransom for many, showing his eternal and unending love for the saints. I did not want this project to be about how men can do things differently to get a better marriage but rather to show that what is needed is a correct view of who Christ is and a personal and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Instead of behavioral modification, husbands need Jesus. They need to be saved from their own sin that comes from their hearts and has infected their lives. Jesus is the answer, and this project clearly communicated that fact.

The third strength of the project was how much Scripture I used in preparing for and presenting the content of the project. I wanted to use Scripture as the basis for all of my points. I wanted to use examples found in the Bible of people who either experienced or embodied the truths that were presented in the project. I wanted to show

that Scripture was sufficient for dealing with temptations and problems within marriage and our ability to counsel one another. I wanted to encourage the men to read Scripture for themselves, read Scripture with their wives, and memorize and reflect upon God's Word on a daily basis. I could not overemphasize the importance of Scripture in the seminar.

The fourth strength of this project was the amount of time (and questions) given to personal reflection within the seminar. The men were able to field questions that allowed them to think about their own lives, their responses to their wives, and how they wanted to change going forward. Oftentimes, we get a lot of teaching but not a lot of time to absorb the information. Change takes time. Each session had application questions and most of the sessions had practical ways to implement the teaching as well. I wanted to give them encouragement so that they could actually change what they are doing right now. I wanted them to think hard about their current heart condition. I am hoping that they also were able to think about these truths after the seminar as well. I wanted them to use their mental capacities to think about their wives, the concerns of their wives, and how they were able to lovingly serve their wives without having to just react to daily situations. This seminar helped to provide the environment for them to think but then also gave them questions to ponder after the seminar.

The fifth strength to this project was that it is repeatable. I could not only train other men to give this seminar because of the workbook and the notes that I have already taken but it also fits in the North American evangelical church setting. If there was someone who wanted to bring in a speaker for a men's retreat, this material would be suitable for such an occasion. It could be used at another church setting. For example, one church in the area expressed wanting a seminar or having me present this seminar at their church. Also, because the seminar has eight different sessions, it could be broken up into multiple days or could be a topical approach. For example, "Servant-Leadership: Rooted

in Jesus Christ” could be a standalone talk within a larger seminar format, or it could be combined with sessions 3-5 to present during a weekend seminar. Another option would be to go deeper, and I would present all eight sessions again. Flexibility with the content is one of the strengths of the project.

The sixth strength to the project was the personal stories which I included at the beginning of most of the sessions. The examples that I gave were relatable; the men could see themselves either doing something similar, or they have done something exactly the same as I had done. This provided a good setting for the men to receive the information that I was teaching on and also to help them remember some of the points that I had given throughout the seminar. We can remember things that are attached to stories easier sometimes than just teaching alone. Also, the personal stories gave some credibility to my own character that I am not a perfect person. I am not better than the people who I am presenting to but rather I have learned through experience and through reading God’s Word. I am just another person along the journey, which is why I subtitled the seminar, “*Learning to Lead like Christ.*” I am still learning myself, and I gave them examples on how I learned the hard way. Also, by telling the stories, I can engage the audience with emotional highs and lows.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

There were various weaknesses to this project. The first weakness of this project was that only thirteen men attended the seminar. I had hoped to get a larger number of men, but many had previous obligations or were out of town. I needed at least twelve to be able to fill out the BFMS survey, so that goal number one was able to be completed; however, a personal goal I had was to have even more men attend. This will require another seminar to be able to accomplish reaching more men with this material.

The second weakness to this project was that I tried to fit too much information into the allotted time. For instance, each session could have been easily stretched to 45

minutes or longer, but I kept it within the 30-35 minute time frame. I felt a bit rushed through the material, and, after the seminar, I reviewed some of the notes that I wanted to say and realized I had not said a couple points that would have been helpful. One participant also noted the same sentiment on the comments section of the post-seminar survey. The information would not have changed the structure or themes of the seminar, but there were other thoughts I had wanted to share with the group. If I had extended the session time to 45 minutes, it would have also helped provide more time to reflect on the application questions that I had for them.

The third weakness of the project happened before the presentation of the seminar. In my pursuit to acquire a space for the seminar, I was running out of time to advertise to the congregation and to the community because I had not secured the location. Once I heard back from our senior pastor that I was able to use the church for the seminar, we sent out the advertisement the very next day.

The timing of the seminar was during the summer when many families are on vacation. Another common response that I received was that they had a final weekend with their children before they sent them back to college, so the particular timing of this seminar conflicted with some of the men's schedules. This is to be expected for any sort of seminar; not everyone can attend, but if I could have given them more advanced notice, they could have potentially worked something into their schedules or made other possible arrangements.

The fourth weakness to the project included the target audience and who was invited to the seminar. My goal was to help increase the knowledge of married men which I was able to show successfully; however, after pondering that goal, I have a heart to train up and show the next generation what it means to be a servant-leader in marriage as well. I had more than one person who inquired if they could bring their sons, but this particular seminar was designed for married men because the surveys were created to

show knowledge increase of *husbands*. Nevertheless, I think even if fathers had brought their sons, it would have been beneficial for the boys to learn ahead of time what servant-leadership in marriage looks like. So, the weakness that I see for this project is having too narrow of a target audience, focusing only on the married men, and not including single men (or boys) who are desiring to be married someday.

### **Proposed Changes to the Project**

I have twelve proposed changes that I would make to the project. The first change is the amount of time per session. The average time for each session during this seminar was 30-35 minutes, but I would change it to 45 minutes at least. In fact, the most ideal time would be one hour. The longer time would allow for more discussion during each session, and I would not feel rushed getting through all of the material.

The second change to the project would be to extend the overall seminar timeframe to greater than one day. The ideal setting in order to cover all the material would be in a retreat setting or a two-day weekend seminar for men. Another option is one night a week for eight weeks. I could also present the material during a marriage seminar where the ladies would also attend, and I would have my wife present material that she has prepared for the women as well. We could bring the class together and have a joint session, too. This would require some additional work to prepare sessions together that we have not done yet, but it could be a time of enrichment for both the men and the women to come together and listen to what God's Word has to say about their roles and their marriage. Either way, the seminar would be longer than one day.

The third change to the project would be to have more content about how to use God's Word specifically to help other people through their issues. I have a heart to help others through biblical counseling, and I want to help train other men to be able to do that as well. Also, the question that scored the lowest on the pre-seminar survey involved the men feeling unqualified to counsel another person (question nine). It also



was the lowest score on the post-seminar survey, so this tells me that there is room for improvement on their own abilities and knowledge on how to use God's Word in this setting. On the pre-seminar survey, question nine scored over one point lower on average than any other question, and, on the post-seminar survey, question nine remained over one point lower on average than any other question. Therefore, I conclude that their overall confidence and ability in counseling is low, so more teaching could boost their knowledge and ability. They also need hands-on experience where they could sit in on a counseling session or observe role-playing.

The fourth change to the project that I would implement is to allow more time for questions. On my previous proposed change, I suggested adding more time for content. This change is adding more time for questions. During our break sessions, various men would come up to me and ask good questions, and I had a limited amount of time to address them during the breaks. I think that it would have been good for them to ask those questions during the seminar so that everyone could hear their thoughts, but we did not have ample time to do it. The change also includes having the men write down their questions and hand them in during the break, and I could choose which questions that I could focus on or bring up during the subsequent sessions. This would permit me time to sift through the questions and even give me time to think through an answer. Then, we can spread that knowledge to all of the men in the group. I believe it is important to address the questions that men have on their minds because it will solidify the material for them afterwards, and the content becomes relevant to their lives. Other men might have the same questions, too, but do not want to ask those questions in front of everybody.

The fifth change that I would implement is creating fill in the blanks for the workbooks. I have been to seminars that have everything laid out for you in the workbook, so you do not have to take notes; I have been to seminars where they have fill

in the blanks, so you have to stay engaged and write down the answers in order to follow along. I did leave space for them to take notes after quotes and themes within the workbook, but I also did not have any specific fill in the blanks listed out for them. I would start by making the practical implementation sections as fill in the blanks. This is not a major change but might help the participants follow along and pay attention during the seminar.

The sixth change to this project would be to secure the location for the seminar at least two months in advance of the seminar. In this case, it was less than one month before the seminar, which did not give the men much time to plan. The original plan was to have a marriage seminar where both men and women attend, but then the project focused on husbands only. This is the first time that I have hosted a seminar, so planning and working out all the details for the seminar is new to me. I would have the church advertise on Sunday mornings during the service and during Sunday school. I would also add the seminar to the community calendar, and the local Christian radio station could advertise for free. Also, it would be beneficial to have a registration page available beforehand on the church website.

The seventh change to the project centers around the BFMS. The survey should have been given to the participants before the seminar weekend. Then, after reviewing the data from the survey, I could have tailored the curriculum to help the areas that scored the lowest on the pre-seminar survey. I had not taken advantage of using the data to effectively create the teaching curriculum.

The eighth change to the project would be the scale used on the BFMS. I used the incorrect scaling method. The doctoral handbook spells out that an acceptable scale is 1 to 6. Also, I could have used a 1 to 5 scale, but the 1 to 6 scale is the preferred scale. The 1 to 6 scale does not allow the participants to have a neutral option, so the answers

will have a certain shade to them—either a positive connotation or a negative connotation.

For the ninth change, I would have added more questions on the BFMS. The additional questions would have given increased insight into the knowledge base of the participants. I realized that there is more information that would have been helpful before creating the seminar material, especially revolving around counseling one another with God's Word.

The tenth change would be the wording used on the BFMS. For example, question 3 states, "How well do you think you understand the biblical principles for communication in marriage?" The question suggests that there is a finite number of principles (*the* biblical principles) found in the Bible on communication. The Bible does not lay out a set number of principles for communication. So, I could have changed the wording to this: "How well do you think you understand what the Bible teaches about communication in marriage"?

The eleventh change would have been matching the survey questions directly to the curriculum outline and teaching. For each of the survey questions, I had material within the curriculum to address the knowledge areas, but the structure and content should have been linked more concretely to the survey questions. So, the scale, wording, number of questions, and the content produced because of the survey questions could have all been improved. Any future projects should incorporate these improvements.

The twelfth change to the project is using Adam as an example for servant-leadership. Adam can be seen as what not to do, but we do not have specific details on how he would have been a servant-leader using Scripture. There can be speculations, but other relevant Old Testament biblical examples could have been taught. For example, Boaz's kindness, pursuit, care, and love for Ruth would be a prime illustration. Also, Hosea's faithfulness to an adulterous wife shows God's kindness and faithfulness, gently

leading his people. Other truths could have been expounded upon from Proverbs or Song of Solomon. These other examples could be used in future teachings.

### **Theological Reflections**

The first theological reflection from this project centers around Jesus Christ. I wanted to use Jesus as the foundation for everything in this project (1 Cor 3:11). Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2). Jesus is our perfect example on how to live. Jesus took the form of servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man, he became obedient to death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:7-8) and rose to life on the third day (1 Cor 15:4). Jesus perfectly displayed humility in coming to earth dying for our sins after living a sinless life (Heb 4:15), and he is our savior (2 Tim 1:10). Jesus also described himself as gentle and lowly in heart (Matt 11:29), and we are called to walk in love like Christ (Eph 5:2). Husbands are to model Christ as he loves the church (Eph 5:25), and our character needs to be formed through the Holy Spirit and produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). Christ showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, he died for us (Rom 5:8). This love that Jesus has for the church is the same kind of love that husbands need to have for their wives; it is costly and hard, but Jesus has done it. He can meet us in our weakness for when we are weak, then we are strong in Christ (2 Cor 12:10) through whom we can do all things by God's strength that he provides (Phil 4:13). So, whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, it is all done to God's glory (1 Cor 10:31), and this includes husbands being servant-leaders of their wives.

The second theological reflection is about marriage itself. After studying, researching, and spending time thinking about marriage, I can see that God created marriage so that people can mirror Christ's relationship to the church (Eph 5:32). Marriage is founded on God's covenantal relationship he has with his people (Eph 5:21ff); God gave the ability for Adam and Eve to marry and become one flesh (Gen

2:24), and he allows people today to join in on this reality through marriage between a man and a woman. We will also enjoy this covenantal relationship with God forever in eternity (Rev 19:6-9). In heaven, we will not be married to each other but rather God's eternal covenant with us will be fulfilled (Luke 20:34-38). The ability to love one another in marriage comes from God; we are able to love one another through the power that God supplies (1 Pet 4:11).

The third theological reflection from this paper revolves around temptation and sin within marriage. I have a section on common temptations for husbands, and I found that a common tendency is to shift the blame for sin. Instead of acknowledging sin comes from our own wicked desires, we blame Satan, other people (i.e., wife), circumstances, or even God, but God does not tempt anyone and cannot be tempted by evil (Jas 1:13). This goes back to the first sin with Adam and Eve. When God confronted Adam about his sin, Adam chose to blame Eve for giving him the fruit to eat, and he also blamed God for making the woman who gave him the fruit (Gen 3:12). Adam blamed others for his own choice. Eve did the same when God addressed her sin; she blamed the serpent deceiving her (Gen 3:13), yet, although the serpent did lie to Eve, she chose not to believe in God's Word. Sin comes out of the heart (Matt 5:19), but there is hope. God has given us his Word with a promise that he will provide a way of escape so that we will be able to stand against sin (1 Cor 10:13). On this side of heaven, we will inevitably fail, but it is Christ and his righteousness (Phil 3:9) who we are putting our hope in; it is not my own ability but rather Christ's work on the cross and his resurrection power that will save us from our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

### **Personal Reflections**

The first personal reflection on this project deals with how I was challenged by the material that I gathered. I came to grips with the reality about my own servant-leadership within my marriage. Throughout life, I have been busy with providing for the

family and dealing with trials and hardships, and I have not stopped and thought a lot about how I am consciously trying to love my wife as Christ loves the church. By God's grace, I need to be constantly pursuing a deeper relationship with Christ because if I am loving God, pursuing him, filling my mind with his Word, praying to him for all of my needs, giving him thanks and praise, and being used by the Holy Spirit, then that sets the groundwork for loving other people, namely, my wife. I had to take a hard look at how I have grown in my servant-leadership throughout the seventeen years of marriage. During our first years of marriage, I had an insignificant amount servant-leadership, but, by God's grace, I am learning to apply these truths daily in my own walk. I wanted to speak to the men as though I have wrestled with this material myself, and I believe that came across well, which is beneficial in the long run. Our men's ministry at Bethel hosts a few activities for personal growth throughout the year, but this seminar specifically focused on the need of men's leadership within the home.

A second personal reflection on this project is how God uses circumstances in in life to stretch us to become more like him. This project has been difficult to finish, juggling all the responsibilities God has entrusted to my care: having five children, fixing up a home for four years, working full-time, volunteering at church, being an associate pastor, and trying to complete this project. Although the process has been very challenging, God has never left me nor forsaken me. I have been driven many times to my knees in prayer for dependence on Christ; I needed God's provision and perseverance to continue, and I am thankful that God has given me the ability to reflect on where I came from and where I am going. I am thankful for my wife, her support, and all of her loving kindness that she has shown me throughout this process as well. I just know that difficult things in life usually are worthwhile, but it is hard to see that while I am going through them.

A third personal reflection is on the joy that I had after giving the seminar. I was very encouraged to hear from other men on how they viewed the seminar and what their thoughts were. Everyone that I talked to expressed positive responses; I do not believe they were just using flattery to make small talk or boost my self-confidence. I truly believe they found encouragement from God's Word and were spurred on to love and good deeds through this seminar. So, it gives me much joy to know that I could help out in some way to point them to Christ. I pray that it will not only affect their marriages but also would provide the foundation for the next generation to see the father in their home modeling Christ's relationship with the church.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would consider that this project was successful in that it increased the knowledge of those who participated and helped encourage the men to become more like Christ in their marriages. The purpose of this project was to strengthen marriages within the membership of Bethel Evangelical Free Church in Fairmont, Minnesota, specifically addressing husbands about their role in a God-honoring marriage using a biblical counseling framework. I was able to teach about the foundation of marriage, Christ's servant-leadership, the character of Christ, discussing popular views on love within marriage, and exhorting the men to live godly lives, resisting temptations that may arise within marriage. The biblical counseling aspect was to focus on using the Bible for our source of truth for life and godliness, while relying on the body of Christ to come along side each other to help one another. I hope that I can replicate this seminar in the future and that God would be pleased to use it for his glory.

## APPENDIX 1

### BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE SURVEY

Another survey inspired the use of the BFMS.<sup>1</sup> The BFMS was given to each participant in the weekend seminar (goal 1). The data taken from the BFMS was used to assess the overall effectiveness of the project. The survey asked research questions about the participants' current knowledge of a God-honoring marriage. The goal was to increase this knowledge base (goal 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Christopher Dwight Aday, "Equipping Married Couples to Mentor Other Married Couples at Oakland Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi" (DEdMin diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 108-9.



## BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE SURVEY

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your knowledge, wisdom, and experience concerning marital problems and issues. Kirk Jostad is conducting this research for purposes of evaluating knowledge of participants before the marriage seminar for doctoral research. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By your completion of this questionnaire and survey, and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many years have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What do you consider to be the greatest problem (s) in marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles for communication in marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

4. How well do you think you understand the biblical role of the husband?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

5. How well do you think you understand the biblical role of the wife?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

6. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning love in marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

7. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning forgiveness in the marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

8. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning conflict resolution in the marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

9. How confident would you be in ministering (counseling) with someone who is experiencing marital problems or issues?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Confident*

10. How great do you believe is the need for mentoring in a marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Important*

## APPENDIX 2

### CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

The curriculum evaluation tool was given to the expert panel. This rubric determined the effectiveness of the curriculum. No revisions were needed because the expert panel rated sufficient or higher on all categories.

Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Each lesson is clearly relevant to servant-leadership in marriage.					
Each lesson is faithful to biblical teaching on servant-leadership.					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The material is theologically sound.					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Each lesson points husbands to become like Christ.					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3  
SEMINAR WORKBOOK

The seminar workbook was given to the participants during the seminar. Each person had a spiral-bound copy to use and take home.

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# BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE SURVEY

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles for communication in marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Christopher Dwight Aday, "Equipping Married Couples to Mentor Other Married Couples at Oakland Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi" (DEdMin diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 108-9.



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*Not at All*

*Very Well*

5. How well do you think you understand the biblical role of the wife?

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*Very Well*

7. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning forgiveness in the marriage?

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*Very Confident*

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1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Important*

# Biblical Foundations of Marriage: From Genesis to Revelation

Personal Story:

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*Old Testament Foundation of Marriage*

## **Jeremiah 31:31-33**

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

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**Adam before the Fall:**

### **1. Image of God**

#### **Genesis 1:27**

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

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### **2. One flesh with Eve**

#### **Genesis 2:24**

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

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Piper and Grudem sum up the “one flesh” relationship: “It is the profound fusion of two lives into one, shared life together, by the mutual consent and covenant of marriage. It is the complete and permanent giving over of oneself into a new circle of shared existence with one’s partner.”<sup>2</sup>

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### 3. Dominion over creation (Servant-leader)

Köstenberger and Jones say, “Not only does Paul draw attention to the fact that the man was created first, but he also points out that it is not the man who was made for the woman, but the woman for the man (1 Cor. 11:9; see Gen. 2:18, 20) and from the man (1 Cor. 11:8, 12; see Gen 2:22).”<sup>3</sup> They go on to say, “Moreover, the man was the one who received the divine command (Gen. 2:16-17), was presented with the woman (Gen. 2:22), and named the woman with a name derived from his own (Gen. 2:23; see 3:20), which also implies his authority.”<sup>4</sup>

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## *New Testament Foundation of Marriage*

### 1. Christ and the Church

#### **Ephesians 5:29-32**

“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,<sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body.<sup>31</sup> ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’<sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 101.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *Marriage and the Family*, Biblical Essentials (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *Marriage*, 13.

## 2. Marriage of the Lamb

### Revelation 19:6-9

“Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

‘Hallelujah!  
For the Lord our God  
the Almighty reigns.  
<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and exult  
and give him the glory,  
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,  
and his Bride has made herself ready;  
<sup>8</sup> it was granted her to clothe herself  
with fine linen, bright and pure’—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.<sup>9</sup> And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true words of God.’”

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### *Questions*

1. What is marriage?

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2. Why did God design marriage?

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3. How does marriage mirror Christ’s relationship with the Church?

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# Servant-Leadership: Rooted in Jesus Christ

Personal Story:

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*Biblical Foundation of Servant-Leadership*

## Genesis 2:15

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to *work* it and *keep* it.”

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## 1 Corinthians 11:3

<sup>3</sup>“But I want you to understand that the **head** of every man is Christ, the **head** of a wife is her husband, and the **head** of Christ is God.”

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## “Headship” Explained

Grudem says, “In fact, all the standard lexicons and dictionaries for New Testament Greek do list the meaning ‘authority over’ for κεφαλή, ‘head.’”<sup>5</sup> Grudem refutes the argument purported by Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen that translates *kephalē* (κεφαλή) as “source.”

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### 1. Christ as head of every man

Taylor observes, “The relational hierarchy that frames Paul’s whole discussion and sets the relation of man (husband) and woman (wife) alongside the relation of man to Christ and

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<sup>5</sup> Wayne Grudem, “Does κεφαλή (‘Head’) Mean ‘Source’ Or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples,” *Trinity Journal* 6, no. 1 (1985): 47.

Christ to God is not a cultural argument, but an argument grounded in the nature of God and his creation.”<sup>6</sup>

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## 2. Husband as head of a wife

**Ephesians 5:23:** “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.”

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## 3. God as head of Christ

Schreiner says, “I think Paul added the headship of God over Christ right after asserting the headship of man over woman in order to teach that the authority of man over woman does not imply the inferiority of women or the superiority of man.”<sup>7</sup>

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Malphurs says, “In John 13:1-17, Jesus defines servant-leaders as those who *humbly serve others because they love them*.”<sup>8</sup>

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## 8 Practical ways that a husband can exhibit servant-leadership:

1. Reading God’s Word daily and reading Scripture *with his wife*
  2. Praying for his wife, praying *with his wife*, and leading his family in prayer
  3. Showing his family what a relationship with Christ looks like
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<sup>6</sup> Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014), 254.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, “Head Coverings, Prophecies, and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 149.

<sup>8</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 21.

4. Leading his family in worship
5. Actively being involved in fellowship within the church body
6. Providing for his family's physical needs for food, clothing, shelter, and protection
7. Thinking of ways to serve his family
8. Asking for forgiveness when he sins and repenting of those sins

***Questions***

1. How can I use my leadership role to serve my wife?

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2. When was the last time I thought about how to lead my wife, pointing her to Christ?

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3. What do I need to change today, so I can serve my wife in a God-honoring way?

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# Approach: Gentleness— The Virtue of Christ

Personal Story:

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*Biblical Foundation of Gentleness*

## **Galatians 5:22-24**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, *gentleness*, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

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## **David as warrior, king, & *gentle*?<sup>9</sup>**

**1 Samuel 16:18:** “Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, **a man of war**, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the Lord is with him.”

David killed lions and bears (1 Samuel 17:34-36), defeated Goliath and cut off his head with a giant sword (1 Samuel 17:51), and dominated all his foes: “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7).

David exhibits gentleness: “Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom” (2 Samuel 18:5).

**2 Samuel 3:38-39:** “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? And I was gentle today, though anointed king. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, are more severe than I. The Lord repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!”

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<sup>9</sup> David Mathis, “Gentleness Made Him Great: Learning from the Strongest of Men,” *Desiring God* (blog), July 1, 2023, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/gentleness-made-him-great>.



## **Jesus perfectly displayed gentleness**

### **Matthew 11:29**

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

### **2 Corinthians 10:1a**

“I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ”

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## **Husband’s approach**

### **1 Peter 3:7**

“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

### **2 Timothy 2:24-26**

“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, <sup>25</sup> correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.”

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## 7 Practical ways that husbands can approach their marriage with gentleness:

1. Speaking words of life-giving encouragement
2. Protecting his wife and using his strength for guarding his wife from danger.<sup>10</sup>
3. Responding kindly during a disagreement
4. Exhibiting patience, especially in stressful situations
5. Listening to her voice with patience
6. Caring for her when she is sick
7. Being “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6b).

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<sup>10</sup> He must never use physical force against his wife. In a marriage where the wife is physically abusive, the husband needs to seek help from others.

***Questions***

1. What ways have I not been gentle to my wife?

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2. What ways have I shown gentleness to my wife?

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3. What were my pre-conceived notions of gentleness?

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4. Is there a certain occasion that continues to bring out irritability within me? Or, is there a re-occurring theme which I am especially susceptible to?

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# Attitude: Humility— The Posture of Christ

Personal Story:

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## *Biblical Foundation of Humility*

### **Philippians 2:3-8**

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

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## Biblical Examples of Humility

### **1. Moses**

#### **Numbers 12:3**

“Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.”

#### **Micah 6:8**

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

France says, “But in the kingdom of heaven meekness is not incompatible with authority.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 337.

## 2. *Mary*

### Luke 1:46-49

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup> for he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

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## 3. *Jesus*

### Matthew 11:29

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am *gentle* and *lowly in heart*, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Jones says, “Amazingly, this is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus self-describes his inner person: he is gentle and humble in heart toward those in need.”<sup>12</sup>

Hagner says, “‘Yoke’ (ζυγόν) is a common metaphor for the law, both in Judaism (*m. ‘Abot* 3:5; *m. Ber.* 2:2; cf. 1QH 6:19) and in the New Testament (Acts 15:10; Gal 5:1).”<sup>13</sup> France says, “A ‘yoke’ implies obedience, indeed often slavery (Gal 5:1; 1 Tim 6:1); what makes the difference is what sort of master one is serving. So, the beneficial effect of Jesus’s yoke derives from the character of the one who offers it.”<sup>14</sup>

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**Ephesians 4:1-3** “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all *humility* and *gentleness*, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

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<sup>12</sup> Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green, *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2021), 167.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, in vol. 33a of *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. Ralph P. Martin (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 324.

<sup>14</sup> France, *Matthew*, 337.

Sande says, “He has given those in authority strict commands not to take advantage of their positions, but rather to diligently serve and look out for the well-being of those whom they are called to lead (Mark 10:42-45; cf. Eph. 5:25-33; 6:4, 9; 1 Peter 3:7; 5:1-3).”<sup>15</sup>

Hagner states, “Despite the overwhelming significance of his person and his mission, Jesus comes meekly and humbly as a servant (cf. the Servant of the Lord in Isa 42:2-3; 53:1-12) and thus shows himself to be more worthy of trust than are the Pharisees.”<sup>16</sup>

7 Practical ways that a husband can exhibit humility in marriage:

1. Admitting own error first
2. Extending forgiveness first
3. Showing small acts of kindness
4. Taking plank out of own eye first
5. Initiating to work on the harder tasks first
6. Looking to her interests and concerns first (serving)
7. Learning to live with his wife according to knowledge

***Questions***

1. What does it mean to be a leader yet be humble?

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2. What ways have I shown humility toward my wife?

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3. How did Jesus give us an example of humility?

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4. Why is it important that I have an attitude of humility in marriage?

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<sup>15</sup> Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 123.

<sup>16</sup> Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, in vol. 33a of *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. Ralph P. Martin (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 324.

# Action: Sacrificial Love— The Work of Christ

Personal Story:

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## *Biblical Foundation of Love*

**Matthew 22:36-39:** “‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

**John 3:16:** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

**John 13:34:** “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

**Ephesians 5:2:** “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

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## **What is love in Greek culture?**

1. Eros (ἔρως)
  2. Storge (στοργή)
  3. Phileo (φιλέω)
  4. Agape (ἀγάπη)
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## *Christ's Example of Sacrificial Love*

**Romans 5:7-8:** “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— <sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

**Mark 10:45:** “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**John 13:14:** “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”

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*Husbands Emulating Christ’s Sacrificial Love*

**1 Corinthians 13:4-5:** “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.”

Ricucci and Ricucci flush out this sacrificial love of the husband: “Sacrifice means providing for her, making sure she never has to sacrifice before, or more, than you do. . . . Sacrifice means protecting her, giving particular attention to the physical, spiritual, emotional, and relational demands on her life in different seasons.”<sup>17</sup>

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Lister says, “In the kindness of God it seems that he has given husbands a daily opportunity to rely on the gospel as they resist a sense of entitlement to ease. By pouring themselves out daily for the well-being of their wives, husbands are pressed into the mold of Christ (Eph 5:25-30).”<sup>18</sup>

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Holmes says, “Biblical love in marriage flows out of our relationship with Christ into a covenantal commitment to self-sacrifice in small and large ways for the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of my spouse.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Gary Ricucci and Betsy Ricucci, *Love That Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 36.

<sup>18</sup> Rob Lister, “Husbands, Love Your Wives by Being the ‘Bad Guy,’” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 18, no. 2 (2013): 10.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan D. Holmes, *Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 89.

Vernick says, “It is never wise or godly to sacrifice our self in order to give our spouse more license to sin (gamble, abuse drugs, abuse us or our children, etc.).”<sup>20</sup>

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Practical ways that husbands can show sacrificial love:

1. Daily incorporating servant-leadership, gentleness, and humility into acts of kindness for the benefit of the other person without expecting anything in return and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. Anticipate concerns, desires, and needs of his wife and act on them.
3. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
4. Say, “I love you” everyday

***Questions***

1. When was the last time you thought about how you can sacrificially love your wife?
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2. What were the circumstances in which it proved to be difficult to love?
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3. How do forgiveness and love go hand-in-hand?
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4. How can we spur one another on to love and good deeds?
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<sup>20</sup> Leslie Vernick, *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong* (New York: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 155.



# Popular Views on *Love* in Marriage: Christian and Secular

*Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman

“Misbehavior grows out of an empty love tank . . . people desperately need to feel loved.”

“Once you identify and learn to speak your spouse’s primary love language, I believe that you will have discovered the key to a long-lasting, loving marriage.”<sup>21</sup>

Words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch

Positive points:

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Negative points:

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*Love and Respect* by Emerson Eggerichs

“[*Love and Respect*] is about how the wife can fulfill her need to be loved by giving her husband what he needs—respect.”<sup>22</sup>

“In Ephesians 5:33, Paul is clearly saying that wives need love and husbands need respect.”<sup>23</sup>

Positive points:

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<sup>21</sup>Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts* (Chicago: Northfield, 2010), 16.

<sup>22</sup> Emerson Eggerichs, *Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2004), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Eggerichs, *Love and Respect*, 15.

Negative points:

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***Real Love*** by Greg Baer

“Greatest human need is to be happy.”<sup>24</sup>

“When people don’t get enough unconditional love as children, they feel terribly empty and afraid. People who feel empty and afraid can’t be happy, and they can’t have loving relationships, because they’re too busy filling their own needs and protecting themselves.”<sup>25</sup>

Positive points:

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Negative points:

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***The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*** by John Gottman and Nan Silver

“At the heart of my program is the simple truth that happy marriages are based on a deep friendship. By this I mean a mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other’s company.”<sup>26</sup> “They also support each other’s hopes and aspirations and build a sense of purpose into their lives together.”<sup>27</sup>

Enhance your love maps, Build fondness, admiration, Turn toward each other, Let your partner influence you, Solve the solvable problems, Manage perpetual problems, Create shared meaning

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<sup>24</sup> Greg Baer presentation.

<sup>25</sup> Greg Baer, *Real Love: The Truth about Finding Unconditional Love and Fulfilling Relationships* (New York: Gotham Books, 2003), 12.

<sup>26</sup> John Gottman, and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 19.

<sup>27</sup> Gottman and Silver, *Making Marriage Work*, 23.

Positive points:

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Negative points:

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*Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* by John Gray

“Only when we do not understand one another is there tension, resentment, or conflict.”<sup>28</sup>

“When men and women are able to respect and accept their differences then love has a chance to blossom,” and, “Love is magical, and it can last, if we remember our differences.”<sup>29</sup>

Positive points:

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Negative points:

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### **Questions**

1. How have these popular views on love shaped your own opinion?

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2. What is a biblical response to these popular views on love?

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3. Are there any views on love that you need to change?

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<sup>28</sup> John Gray, preface to *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), xxix.

<sup>29</sup> Gray, *Men Are from Mars*, 7.

# Common Temptations for Husbands

Personal Story:

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**Matthew 15:19:** “For *out of the heart* come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.”

**James 4:1-3:** “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are *at war within you*?<sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”

**James 1:13-15:** “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. <sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed *by his own desire*. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

**First Thessalonians 3:5:** “I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had **tempted** you and our labor would be in vain.”

If a husband gets stuck in a pattern of sin, how does he change his heart (desires)? Pierre says, “The key to change will always be a dynamic relationship of faith with our heavenly Father, his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit who empowers God’s people.”<sup>30</sup>

## 1. *Selfishness*

**Genesis 3:6:** “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be **desired to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”

**Philippians 2:3:** “Do nothing from **selfish** ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

1. Desiring to be first
2. Not caring about spouse’s concerns
3. Wanting to please himself
4. Taking first, serving second (if at all)
5. Always has to be right, opinion is best, must win every argument

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<sup>30</sup> Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 239.

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## 2. *Anger*

**Genesis 4:5:** “but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very **angry**, and his face fell.

**James 1:19-20:** “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to **anger**; <sup>20</sup> for the **anger** of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

Robert Jones describes anger as “our whole-personed active response of negative moral judgment against perceived evil.”<sup>31</sup>

1. Harshness
  2. Rudeness
  3. Bitterness/unforgiving
  4. Raising voice/yelling
  5. Clamming up/disengaged
  6. Physical confrontation
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## 3. *Fear*

**Genesis 3:10** says, “And he said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was **afraid**, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’”

Stuart Scott says, “Ungodly fears are directly related to what we are thinking.”<sup>32</sup>

Mack says, “A person worries when thoughts about the past, present, or future consume and constrain that person in some way.”<sup>33</sup>

1. Inadequacy
2. Guilt/Shame
3. Lack of courage/leadership

**1 John 4:18:** “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”

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<sup>31</sup> Robert D. Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 15.

<sup>32</sup> Stuart Scott, *Anger, Anxiety, and Fear: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2009), 16.

<sup>33</sup> Wayne A. Mack, *Anger and Stress Management God's Way*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 81.

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#### 4. *Sexual Sins*

**First Thessalonians 4:3:** “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality.”

**First Corinthians 10:8:** “We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.”

1. Lust of the eyes
  2. Pornography
  3. Adultery
  4. Fantasy
  5. Any other form
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#### 5. *Unbelief*

**Genesis 3:1:** “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘**Did God actually say**, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden”?’”

**Romans 11:20:** “They were broken off because of their **unbelief**, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.”

1. Lack of zeal for the Lord
  2. Not believing in promises of God
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#### *Look to Christ, who is your head*

**Matthew 4:1:** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be **tempted** by the devil.

**Hebrews 4:15:** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been **tempted** as we are, yet without sin.

**First Corinthians 10:13:** No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be **tempted** beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

***Questions***

1. Is there one particular temptation that keeps recurring?

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2. What are radical steps that can be taken during temptation?

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3. Do you talk to your spouse about being tempted? Why or why not?

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4. Can you name 1 or 2 people that you would trust telling your temptations?

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# Reflection/Application

1. Name 1 or 2 things you want to do differently starting today.

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2. Recap of biblical roles of husband and wife

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3. Summary of love, forgiveness, and conflict resolution

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4. Summary of gentleness, humility, and communication within marriage

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**2 Timothy 3:16-17:** “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

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**Notes:**

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# BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE SURVEY

1. How many years have you been married?<sup>34</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

2. What do you consider to be the greatest problem (s) in marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles for communication in marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

4. How well do you think you understand the biblical role of the husband?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

5. How well do you think you understand the biblical role of the wife?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

6. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning love in marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

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<sup>34</sup> Adapted from Christopher Dwight Aday, "Equipping Married Couples to Mentor Other Married Couples at Oakland Baptist Church in Corinth, Mississippi" (DEdMin diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 108-9.

7. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning forgiveness in the marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

8. How well do you think you understand the biblical principles concerning conflict resolution in the marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Well*

9. How confident would you be in ministering (counseling) with someone who is experiencing marital problems or issues?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Confident*

10. How great do you believe is the need for mentoring in a marriage?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

*Not at All*

*Very Important*

Comments:

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## ABSTRACT

### STRENGTHENING MARRIAGES BY TRAINING MEN AT BETHEL EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH IN FAIRMONT, MINNESOTA, USING A BIBLICAL COUNSELING FRAMEWORK

Kirk Robert Jostad, DMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stuart W. Scott

This project aimed to strengthen marriages at Bethel Evangelical Free Church in Fairmont, Minnesota, specifically focusing on the husbands. Chapter 1 details the background information of the project, giving the context, rationale, goals, and research methodology. Chapter 2 lays the biblical and theological foundation for the project. I argue that husbands must fulfill the command to be a servant-leader in marriage by displaying humility, gentleness, and sacrificial love. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical and practical application for this thesis: biblical counseling principles support strengthening marriages by teaching that husbands are commanded to be servant-leaders, seeking to exemplify humility and gentleness while growing in Christ-like love for their wives. Chapter 4 specifies the details about the weekly preparation, implementation, and follow-up to the project. Chapter 5 offers the evaluation of the project.

VITA

KIRK ROBERT JOSTAD

EDUCATION

BA, University of Northwestern—St. Paul, 2007

MATS, University of Northwestern—St. Paul, 2009

MDiv, University of Northwestern—St. Paul, 2018

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Garrett Fellow, The Southern Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky,  
2022

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Pastoral Intern, Bethel Evangelical Free Church, Fairmont, Minnesota, 2018

Associate Pastor, Bethel Evangelical Free Church, Fairmont, Minnesota, 2020-