



MONDAY 6/15/20

SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD'S WAY

Speaker: Nat Crawford (w/Arnie & Cara)

Title: Family Done God's Way: Marriaging to the Fullest Pt. 1

What does an ideal marriage look like? What makes a successful marriage?

People give all sorts of answers today. Some people say, "An ideal marriage is happiness or being in love." Others will say an ideal marriage is companionship that's experienced in similar interests or desires. Some people would say an ideal marriage is really good sex.

These are common answers from people today. If I could summarize the main idea in all of these responses, it would be this: an ideal marriage is based on how my spouse makes me *feel*. The problem is that if an ideal marriage is measured by happy feelings, no one would get married or stay married. Marriage is as the song just said it's like "Dancing in the Minefields". Marriage is hard and it's riddled with minefields, but it can still be *dancing* in the minefields.

So, what *really* makes a successful marriage? That's what we want to talk about in Ephesians 5, beginning in verse 21 (ESV).

...Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 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. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

This could be one of the most abused and misunderstood passages in the New Testament. Unfortunately, too many husbands have used verse 22 as a proof text to be overbearing, controlling and abusive. Early in my marriage, I was one of them. All I heard was "wives submit." In other words, when you're married, if she disagrees, tell her to submit. And if she doesn't, she's out of compliance. Well, friends, I was wrong.

I hope to clear up the confusion and abuse, but not deny the reality of God's design for marriage. So, to understand this section of Scripture, let's back up. I believe if you read this section of Scripture in context, it clears up the confusion.

Paul in verse 15 says, "Look carefully then how you walk." There is a way that you and I as Christians, as the body of Christ, are to live. What is that way? Let me read it to you. Ephesians 5 beginning in verse 15: Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is.¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

According to verse 15 we are to live not as unwise, but wise. What does that mean? It means we don't use the playbook of the *world*; instead we use the playbook of the *Word*. 1 Cor. 3:19 says, "For the wisdom of this world is folly with God." The world says, you're god. You're number #1. Everyone else is below you. So whatever you desire, it's right. Whatever you feel is truth. Whatever you want, you should have, no matter the cost. The problem is that this kind of narcissism is unlivable. It's unsustainable, and it's deadly for society and oneself. Listen to Jeremiah 8:9, "The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken; behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD, so what wisdom is in them?" Jeremiah emphasizes that wisdom apart from God's wisdom is foolishness indeed!

What's the alternative? Again, it's not to live by the world, but live by the Word. How? Well you take your marching orders from the Bible. You turn to God's Word as the first and final authority over your life. And it's there in God's Word; he defines true wisdom:

Psalms 111:10 says, "¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!" What does that mean? God's portrayed as our Heavenly Father. I don't want to be afraid of God. So, to fear God is the beginning of wisdom.

And this fear is two-sided. The first part of it is respecting God. It's knowing who He is. He is God and we are not. We are the creation and not the Creator. He is all powerful, all-knowing. He's everywhere. He is sovereign over all. Nothing happens without His will making it or allowing it. He also offers us salvation by grace through faith. Us, sinful creatures. Us, enemies of God. But by grace, He makes us righteous before Him and calls us His own children. That's why we respect God. But also, fearing sees God truly as God. It's a full view of God. He is the One who numbers our days. He's the One who created all things both invisible and visible. It is seeing God as loving and also just. He will deal with sin. He has dealt with it on the cross. And He will also deal with it in His children. Hebrews 12 reminds us that God will discipline His children because He loves them. That shouldn't be our motivation for obedience. We should obey God because we love Him, and this reality of His discipline and His authority should reinforce this.

Well, back in Ephesians 5, in verse 18, Paul says we are not to live uncontrolled lives, or lives that are driven by our reckless passions, but instead, we are to live as people who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

One of the ways this walking by the power of the Holy Spirit is seen, is in verse 21, and this is key. Paul writes, [“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”](#)

As followers of Christ, we are to mutually live in submission to each other. This is true in the context of the church, and it is true in the context of marriage. Paul will write in his other letters that God has given us, His spiritual children, spiritual gifts. Not one is better than the other. They are there to serve the body of Christ. Likewise, in Genesis, it says that God created man and woman in His image. Therefore, we are of equal value and different. This is to be embraced and celebrated.

This is so important too, because so often this passage, particularly verse 22, gets used inappropriately ... and we'll talk more about that in just a moment.

DISCUSSION:

N: But first let's hear from my discussion partners, Arnie Cole and Cara Whitney. Okay. Here's my question. I want to kind of lighten it up a little bit from our usual discussion points. I want to know, who is your favorite onscreen married couple, and why? That could be from TV. It could

be from movies. Who would you choose?

C: I liked the Douglases from *Green Acres*. [Why?] Well, because there seems to be an awful lot of compromise. I mean, she moved from the city to the farm, and then at one point, she had the opportunity. He wanted to move back to the city, and she knew that wouldn't make him happy. So she decided to stay six months longer.

N: How about you Arnie?

A: I like *The Donna Reed Show* or *Leave it to Beaver* with Ward Cleaver, because the man was always right. And I thought that was just... ..and there was dinner always on the table when he got home. And it was just like, those were the days, my friend. [the days of Eddie Haskell] My hero, one of my heroes, [and they are long gone, long gone].

C: How about you Nat?

N: Ooh. You know, I wrote that question and I have yet to be able to come up with an answer. I mean, I'm just glad, neither of you suggested the Sopranos were kind of your ideal married couple. I mean, that was one of my fears, but honestly, it's not so much a couple, but rather it's a moment that was caught. As you guys know, I love musicals, and in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, there's this great exchange between Tevye and his wife, and the song is called, "Do you love me?" And as you know, in that play, that they were married from an arranged marriage. You know, it wasn't about love, but there comes this point where now Tevye is wrestling with this notion of love, and people actually get married for it. And he finally turns to his wife, and just says, do you love me? And they go through this exchange of, you know, reasons why they got married, and why, you know, the things she does for him. And at the end, he goes, you know, "then you love me". And she goes, "I suppose I do". And then they lean into each other, and he says, "I suppose I love you too". And it's just this beautiful moment, where these people who have fought so hard for their roles and their positions, and to keep this tradition alive, that they realize, you know what, it's actually okay to be okay with each other, and just love each other. I think that's a sweet moment. And I might even cry right now.

A: I had no idea you like musicals.

C: I was going to say, “well, I knew that”. In fact, when you talked about how you went into your marriage, Nat, and you thought that “submissive” was that you just “ruled your roost”, I find that so crazy.

N: Yeah. Well, and you know, what's kind of interesting is, our producer, Paula, and I had this exchange. She goes, “I just can't see that being true for you”. And the reality was, is whether it was from poor teaching, or poor exegesis on my part, but when I read that, *submit*, to me, it honestly did. It was just, “well, whatever I say goes”, and I pulled that stuff out of my marriage from time to time. And let me tell you, it did not sit very well, and because it wasn't supposed to, but then again, you know, you look at that musical *Fiddler*, that is Tevye, right? I mean, he smacks his hands and he says, “Golde, listen”. And of course she blows him off anyway, but that image that I think so many of us saw, whether it's in TV's or movies, or maybe just again by poor theology, but it really is how I thought a marriage was supposed to be run. And it came to find out, I was quite wrong.

C: Well, you know, that just makes me feel for women who are in that sort of situation, because how lonely that must be, to not have a voice, [right]. That's hard stuff.

N: Well, and that's why it was so important to start talking about these topics on the radio and in podcasting, because I cannot tell you how many times in marriage counseling, I would encounter a spouse who had been brow beaten by their husband. Now, granted, it happens on the other side as well. And I think I see that more and more, but the reality is, a lot of women were told that they don't have a say, they don't have an opinion. Their job is to cook, clean, and push out babies. The reality is, God has so much more for the wife, and so much more for the husband, when they lean into God's design, but that's not what they're told. And it's not what they're sold, in my opinion.

Friends, as husband and wife, you are to be teammates, partners. Because of this, you defer to each other's strengths. You defer to each other's spiritual gifts. To your passions and expertise. You are co-equals – both made in the image of God. God has made you both unique and valuable. Lean into this reality.

Submission does not imply obedience. It's NOT calling you to be a doormat. It's about being selfless. It is saying, "Let your husband lead and take the responsibility, because this is what God has deemed as best." It's allowing you to lead in your strength areas and passions - to be the woman of God that you are called to be.

Together as a partnership and a team, you are to be collaborating together and leaning into each other's strengths. Take for example, my wife and I. We are in the process of selling our current home and buying another home. Some would say, well, biblically Nat, you're the head of the household. You pick. You buy. Done deal. Your wife needs to submit and get behind you.

Wrong. That's not biblical husbandry. That's not the biblical way to be a wife. This calls for mutual submission. What does that look like? I know what I want. She knows what she wants. And let me tell you, that's not bad. That's not good. That's just the way it is. How we handle this does matter.

Tiffany is a researcher and also a very hands-on person. She comes from a family of home remodelers. So there isn't a project too intimidating for her. Me, I'm all about experiences, and home projects get in the way of experiences for me. I don't like projects. I'm not that good at them. So she's fine with a fixer upper. I'm fine with a home that's turnkey and ready to go. She wants a big yard, which to me means more work.

You get the idea. Mutual submission means opening to talking, listening, asking questions. Listening, and not attacking each other's opinions, but rather understanding our wants, looking mutually at our budget, prayerfully seeking the right home, and mutually choosing a home.

So a godly marriage is one built upon mutual submission, not a dictatorship. When we do this, we get to lean into our strengths, expertise, experiences, and use those to benefit the relationship. We can then be open about our opinions without the worry of being stepped upon or disregarded. We bring what God has gifted us to bring honor to Christ in the marriage.

And that's why we do it. We do it out of reverence for Christ.

I love what one commentator said about this reverence. "Words like reverence or respect are too weak to capture the nuance intended. The positive sense of the fear of Christ points to his power and holiness and to the recognition that he is Lord and coming Judge. Such fear is the ground of

both praise and obedience. We ought not forget that one who is feared is the same one who loved and gave himself up for us.”

Again, submission isn't about obedience. It's about deferment. It's about trusting God and viewing every role as valuable and meaningful. It's about selflessness. When a husband is leading through service - when a husband is in submission to Christ as Lord, it makes submission to one's husband all the easier.

So, we are called as the body of Christ, and as spouses, to be in a consistent posture of mutually dying to ourselves and deferring to each other. This brings us back to verse 22.

Paul said, “*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*” What's interesting is, your version may have “submit” or “be subject” in italics. This is because this isn't actually in verse 22, but it is implied and carried over from verse 21. So verse 21, *brothers and sisters in Christ submit to one another*. Verse 22, wives, you are to live this out. You are to die to yourself in your marriage and defer when good and right and necessary to your husband.

Remember, a marriage is a partnership of helpmates meant to complete each other. No person has it all. We are all equal, but different.

This verse has nothing to do with blind obedience, or being a doormat, or being abused. This is all recognizing that, as Jesus said, “*to be great you must be a servant.*” You are to daily be thinking about your spouse and your family more than yourself. Therefore, defer, submit, lean into each other's strengths, gifts, and even God given responsibilities, to better serve Christ and your family.

A husband has no superiority and a wife has no inferiority, any more than one who has the gift of teaching is superior to the one with another gift. The husband who demands his wife's submission to him, but does not recognize his own responsibility to submit to her, ignores God's standard for the marriage relationship. Remember what Galatians 3:28 says. “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” We are all equal.

And before I move on, do not miss what Paul addresses that the culture largely dismisses today. He identifies the marriage partners as husband and wife. There's a confusion in the culture about

marriage. Unfortunately, there's a lot of false teaching today when it comes to what qualifies for marriage and a godly marriage.

Well, Scripture is clear. Marriage is between one man and one woman. Period.

Genesis 2 tells us that God created man and his name was Adam. And God observed, but was not surprised, that he was alone. It wasn't good for Adam to be alone, so He created him a helper, a woman named Eve. And then it says in 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."

There's the first instance of a godly marriage. One man and one woman for life.

Some argue that Jesus was silent on this topic. That's incorrect. When being questioned by Pharisees about divorce, Jesus said this in Matthew 19: "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,⁵ and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (19:4-6).

So Jesus was clear: one man and one woman constitute a marriage, but not just that - but a godly marriage free from sexual immorality of any kind. So God's view, Jesus' view, on marriage is one man and one woman for life. And within that marriage, we are to see mutual submission to the glory of God, out of reverence for Christ. So therefore, *wives submit to husbands as to the Lord*.

And remember, what wife wouldn't want to defer to her husband when he is deferring to her and loving her unconditionally. So wives, defer, submit, lean into your husband's strengths, gifts, and even God given responsibilities, to better serve Christ and your family.

What do I mean by responsibilities? Verse 23 says, "²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior." God has appointed Christ as the head of the church. He is Lord and He is over the church. Just like the body of Christ, God has appointed the husband as the head – the leader – the one responsible for the family.

Christ is head of the body and He provides guidance, direction, hope, protection, strength, and help for his church. Therefore, the husband is to provide guidance, hope, protection, strength, help for his bride and family.

When this is true, why wouldn't a wife want to lean into her husband's leadership?

Paul says in verse 24, that wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. Does that mean they should follow the husbands lead to sin? No. Things that are intentionally hurtful or destructive to oneself or to the family? Obviously not.

Instead, by everything, he means, the consistent walk of a wife should be in submission – deferment - thinking of him more than yourself, and defer as beneficial to the leadership of a godly husband.

N: All right. Now let me go to my discussion partners, Arnie Cole and Cara Whitney. Cara, I'd like to pick your brain for a moment. I just made a statement about deferring to your husband and how it's beneficial. Give us a practical picture of what that looks like in your life.

C: Well, first of all, I am a verbal processor. So I talk and it helps me process things. We're constantly bouncing things off one another. And I think it's really productive when somebody can tell you that it's not that bad, that you're not crazy, or you're being unreasonable. So I absolutely, I mean, that's what you do with your friends, and your spouse is a friend. And so I think it's all around beneficial. It makes you feel like you're not alone, like there's a partnership going on.

N: Right. And that's such a key component of a Christian marriage, is the teammate and the helper. You guys are leaning into each other to complete each other. And that's a beautiful way of doing marriage. Arnie, as a husband, how do you lead and what does that mean in a marriage?

A: Yeah, that's a great question. One thing in our marriage, we were boaters back in the day, instead of horse ranchers as we are today. And hopefully I can pull this analogy off. So we cruised all over Mexico, and then up through Alaska, and we'd spend months on our boat, and I was the captain and she was the first mate. So I had the say and the responsibility of our

wellbeing, but she played as integral of a role in the success of our voyage as I did. So it's really a partnership to the fullest, to the max. But at the same time, somebody has to call the shots at the end of the day, in collaboration. And you do what you think is best. And especially, when you're on the ocean or in life, it's a big responsibility to defer to the other person, to back them as much as you can, but at the end of the day, you're responsible for her wellbeing. And that's critical.

N: Right. And when you do a marriage biblically, you know, you're actually increasing the value of a wife and of a spouse, when you lean into each other, and you take on the responsibilities that God has given you. I think your imagery there was really perfect for this. So now that we've seen that a Christian marriage is actually valuable, why do you think marriage has become so devalued in our world?

C: Well, it didn't happen overnight. Things tend to sneak into our culture. And one lie that the world believes about marriage, is that it's an old fashioned union. And people just seem to be okay, living together. When you look at, even in a modern marriage, they're selling and building houses now, where the couples are occupying separate bedrooms. And I don't know how that works. I can't imagine living like that, because as a woman, it would make me feel cheap. You know, you talk about husbands giving value to women, and, you know, living together, that type of relationship in the long run, women never come out of anything that the world offers them unscathed.

N: So I'm curious, what is the best thing Christians can do to bring back the value of marriage?

C: I believe it's spreading the Gospel, because Jesus is the only one that can fix the things we've ruined. And so the Bible tells you how God set up marriage. And the only way to get people into the Bible, is for them to accept Jesus and to follow Jesus. So I would say, spread the Gospel.

A: I'd add a little different spin. I'll never forget, as a new believer at 47, I was retired from my first career and I was working at the church as the sound guy. And I was a nobody, but I got involved in these worship meetings, and the big discussion came up. We had ushers, and we had

people singing in the choir, that lived together. And, you know, we couldn't have this. And I kind of tagged along in those conversations, and I'm not kidding you, both of those couples did not know what it said in the Bible, that you're not supposed to live together. And you never know, but as far as I could tell, they were believers, and loved the Lord, but they didn't know enough about the Bible, to even know that a marriage is important. So that says a lot about what we say about marriage, I think in the church; not much, maybe.

N: Well, I think both of you have brought up two key points. First, going back to Cara, we are to model the difference Christ makes in our lives. And so when we do marriage God's way, it actually becomes a beacon of light that points straight up to Christ. So when people are having problems and they do witness us in our marriages, they can come to us and ask, what is it that makes your marriage successful? And that is a huge Gospel opportunity to say, "well, let me tell you exactly what the secret is." And then we let them have the Gospel. But to your point, Arnie, I think you've identified a huge problem. And it's part of what Back to the Bible is doing today. We are coming to people daily with biblical content so that they can be disciplined to become disciple-making disciples. So many topics of the world today are not touched by the church, whether it's sex, marriage, money, stewardship of our time and our talents, you name it. There are so many key pieces of discipleship that are not being taught from the pulpit. So that's why I'm so proud to be part of Back to the Bible, where we are daily coming to our users and our listeners with biblical principles, to help them shape their life for successful living, but more importantly for godly living.