

**“Biblical Perspectives on Love, Marriage and Sex; Part 3—What Men Wish Women Knew About Men”**

Today we're continuing in the sermon series we started several weeks ago called *Biblical Perspectives on Love, Marriage and Sex*. We're going to be talking to the women about the vital role they play in the lives of their men. A key role that women play is in building men up. Why? Because this often happens...**[VIDEO: The Incredibles. Bob is being put down by his boss.]**

Men often find themselves provoked by so many things, and yet restrained from reacting. You see, society really can't seem to make up its mind about men. It's spent the last 40 years redefining masculinity into something more sensitive, safe, manageable and feminine. But now it berates men for not being men! The result is confusion about what it means to be men and women--confusion that seems to be rampant. The author John Eldredge says that our culture has tried to remove our masculinity and turn us all into nice, quiet, behaved, mild-mannered, manicured, hairless, missionless, mindless drones, when what God has placed in our hearts is to look for those significant battles to fight, adventures to live, and people to fight for!

Two weeks ago we tried to fine tune the male role in relationships. We took aim at us men to see how we could do better at meeting the needs of our significant others. After worship two weeks ago a lot of you men were thinking things like, "I can't wait for you to get my wife! I want to see how **she** stacks up!" Well, this isn't about a competition to see who needs more improvement or who is smarter or better or whatever! What we are doing in this series of sermons is looking at how we can build stronger marriages and relationships! We're trying to find out what the Bible has to say to us about how to live in relationship with one another, especially as men and women.

We've got a great opportunity in front of us here, single or married, to grow in our understanding of God and God's plan for our lives. You see, the things that make for great marriages make for great relationships in almost every other area of life as we learn how to live out our Christian faith day by day.

Two weeks ago I asked you men in particular to take notes and to take the scripture passages that we looked at and stick on your bathroom mirror. Women I want to ask you to do the same thing this week. I want everybody to follow along and fill in the blanks but this is especially important for you women, single or married.

Now two weeks ago I have to say that I noticed that some of you men did not take notes during the sermon and I noticed some of you women writing those notes down for them so that you could hand them to them when you got home! Husbands, if your wife's not taking notes, take them for her and hand them to **her** when you get home! Really, my hope as your pastor is to encourage you and strengthen you and help you be in right relationships with one another. Let's work together on that today!

Remember that God's intentions in creating us male and female were that we would be companions and helpers to one another. Marriage is a sacred calling where we are to be God's tangible presence to one another. Not just sexual playmates or lovers or anything else. We're created to be helpers and companions to one another. That was God's intention. And a helper and companion is someone who looks at the needs of their spouse and says, "How can I meet those needs." Great marriages happen when spouses meet one another's needs. Of course some people are called to be single and that is a very high calling, but if you feel called to be married, realize that it's a call to obedience to God.

Two weeks we looked at the results of the survey we sent out along with the results of a survey done in the Kansas City area. We looked at the responses of the women, and this week we'll look at the responses of the men. In this survey single Christian men were asked, **[SLIDE...]** **“What are the characteristics or qualities you're looking for in a woman.”** Here's what they said. The top priority for them was to find a woman who had a **[SLIDE: “1. Strong Christian Faith”]** strong Christian faith. Are you single women listening? 72% of the men said that they are looking for a woman who is a Christian. A lot of them expressed frustration at finding Christian women. Where are they found? In a Christian community, a community of faith, a church. I'll ask you single women what I asked the single men last week. Are you working at growing in your faith? Are you spending as much time at growing in your faith as you are at other things in your life? Your career? Your friends? Your hobbies? Your faith is key to every aspect of life including finding a husband.

The second priority single men are looking for in women is [SLIDE—add to previous: “**2. Attractive Looks**”] attractive looks. There is no getting around the fact that men’s attention is drawn to physical beauty. But almost every man I know will tell you that the most attractive women are not perfect “10’s” when it comes to how they look. Real attractiveness comes from within—from their hearts, how they care. Many men said, “I’m not looking for Miss America. I’m looking for a woman who is attractive to me. A woman who has a presence about her.” A lot of the men said, “I’m not just talking about outward beauty, but about inward beauty as well.” Most men have learned what the writer of Proverbs said: [SLIDE...] “**Beauty if fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised**” (Proverbs 31:30, NIV).

The third quality single men were looking for was [SLIDE—add to previous list: “**3. Sense of Humor**.”] sense of humor. The fourth quality was [SLIDE—add to previous: “**4. Intelligence**”]. The fifth top attribute that single men are looking for was [SLIDE—add to previous: “**5. Similar Interests**”] similar interests.

The sixth top characteristic single men were looking for was a woman who has [SLIDE—add to previous: “**6. Strong Morals**”] strong morals.

Women, if you’re married, take a look at this list because it may well be the things your husband was looking for when he married you. Take and look and ask yourself if you are fulfilling these things. Sometimes we forget these things along the way.

Now let’s look at what married men valued most on this survey. Here’s what they valued most in their wives: Number one, their [SLIDE: “**1. Admiration**”] admiration. Married men said that they feel most loved when their wives admire them, take pride in them, show belief and support of them. Number two was [SLIDE—add to previous: “**2. Listening and Sharing**”] listening and sharing. This is interesting because women over and over said that they want their husbands to talk more, and men want their wives to listen to them more. It reminds me of Toby Keith’s song “I Wanna Talk About Me!” Men want to talk; but they need time, space and an invitation to share things that are important to them. Women, as men talk, don’t rush to fill the silences. He may be pausing to think or breathe and there’s more coming—if you’re patient.

Number three was [SLIDE—add to previous: “**3. Family Support**”] family support. All stereotyping aside, the fact is that most men heavily rely on their wives to be the chief operating officer of the home. Janet is clearly the COO of Brown Inc. She takes care of the details of how our lives go and I would be lost without that. We men need this, and, like I said two weeks ago, we men need to be better at appreciating our wives for their role as COO.

Number four was [SLIDE—add to previous: “**4. Sexual Intimacy**”] sexual intimacy. Married men said that feeling loved included sexual intimacy. Men put this in several ways. One said this, “[I need] honesty, a sense of humor, and some spice.” One of you wrote, “[I need] someone that...will still make you say oh baby when you see her, even after you have been married a long time.” This was not at the top of the list for married men, but when it’s missing it causes deep problems.

Number five was that [SLIDE—add to previous: “**5. “Quality Time Doing Things Together.”**”] Married men reported feeling closest to their wives when they spend quality time doing things together. Women expressed that they wanted quality time to share feelings, but men seemed to want to spend that time in activities. One expert calls this a man’s need for “recreational companionship.”

In our email we asked, “What would change about your significant other if you could change something?” Now, this is where it gets interesting. For men there was a fairly long list of things...but not as long as the women’s list! What do you think is the one thing husbands would want to change most about their wives? The number one answer was, any guesses? The number one answer was “**Absolutely nothing.**” Isn’t that sweet! One of you wrote, “I wish she would stop worrying about her weight and outer appearance so much. I love her for being her.” In all of the women’s surveys about their husbands NONE said they would change absolutely nothing!

Other things men said they would change were, “Her tendency to start more than she can finish,” “Boost her self-esteem/self-worth,” “I would try to change how she puts everyone’s interests above hers!”

“Timeliness,” “That problems are not obstacles...patience” Other men wrote, “Make suggestions, not demands, don’t criticize so much, instead encourage, have a positive attitude.”

What this boils down to is this: experts put it in different ways, illustrate it using different examples, but every man wants to be a **[PICTURE: a knight in shining armor]** knight in shining armor. That may sound silly or archaic, but there’s not a man in this room, there’s not a husband in this room, who wouldn’t like to be your hero. He wants to think that deep down inside you really admire him and you think he’s a great man and you’re proud of who he is. Just like you women would like to be cherished and treasured and loved. Men have this secret fantasy inside of being able to be your knight in shining armor.

The Author John Eldredge in his book, *Wild at Heart* says that the way that God created men is such that there are three desires written deeply in their hearts. Three desires planted within that are core to who men are and, at some level, long to be. **He says that in the heart of every man is a desperate desire for a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue.** I believe it’s true.

Last week we had two words for the men that would revolutionize your marriage. Do you remember what those two words were? That’s right! Thank you. One wife said “You’ve got the wrong two words, they should be ‘You’re right!’”

This week we have five words for you wives to share with your husbands and here they are, “I am proud of you.” Look your husband in the eyes and take his hand and genuinely say, “I’m so proud of you and who you are. I’m so proud to be your wife.” You know what that does to a man? It makes him feel like he’s really something. He really does want to do the things that make you feel that way about him.

So, what does the Bible teach us about all of this? What does the Bible teach us how we are supposed to live in relationship to one another? The first thing is the test that I gave the men to do last week and if you used the study guide last week all of you should have done this on Friday, but ladies you need to take the 1 Corinthians 13 test if you haven’t and see how you do. The passage that talks about love saying that love is patient, love is kind, etc. Replace the word love with your name and see if it describes you and if there are areas where you need help. Ask yourself honestly, “What are the areas where I need God’s help in my love and in my life? In what areas am I struggling to live up to 1 Corinthians 13.” Do that on your own this week.

But for now look at the passage that printed in your program. This is another passage about how Christians in general are to treat one another, how we’re supposed to live and love. It begins, **[SLIDE...]** “**Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.**” (Ephesians 4:29, NRSV).

**This is important stuff.** Only what is useful for building up...so that your words may give grace to those who hear.” Wives listen to this, the world that we face is constantly bringing us down. No one has greater power over your husbands than you do. With your words you have the ability to make him soar, or bring him crashing down. You have the capacity to have him believe in himself or have him believe in nothing.

There are times when after church on Sunday, Janet will say, “Aaron, that was a great sermon.” She doesn’t say that unless she means it. But when she does say it, it makes me feel great! It makes me want to get back up here the next Sunday and do it all over again! Because I believe in myself because of what she’s said. There are times when she will say, “Aaron, I was watching you today and I felt so proud of you.” And it will make me feel like the greatest guy in the world! She has that power. Her opinion matters more to me than anybody else’s opinion. On those rare times when she’s not able to be in worship I feel like something’s missing, I’m not as secure as I could be because the one who is my companion isn’t here. What she thinks and says is so important to me.

Ladies, what you say has power! Use words that build up and give grace to your husbands. Don’t grieve the Holy Spirit.

Paul goes on to say, **[SLIDE...]** “**Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice**” (Ephesians 4:31, NRSV). I know that we men are extremely frustrating to live with. Most of us actually know it and we feel bad about it...sometimes. But, take

your times of frustration with us and say, “God, help me with this. Help me! So that I don’t give my husband just my frustrations.” There are ways to help your husband be better than he is but it is very seldom through criticism. Because that knight in shining armor starts to feel tarnished and dented and the one thing he wants to be most, he can’t be. But when you come to him with words that give grace, with words that give healing and blessing, and you slowly shape him in the right direction, you will have an impact on that man that no one else but the Holy Spirit could have had.

Paul goes on say, **[SLIDE...]** “**be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another...**” (**Ephesians 4:32, NRSV**). Can you imagine what it would be like if we lived like that?! This is your job description as a wife, as a spouse.

Finally, he tells us to **[SLIDE...]** “**be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us**” (**Ephesians 5:2, NRSV**). Our example is Jesus Christ himself. Look at your husband and say, “How can I be in ministry with this man? In what ways can I demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ, that hard, difficult love so that he might be able to see Jesus shining through me?”

Now, take a look at the passage from Ephesians 5:21-28 on your outline. This is a passage that most of us preachers steer clear of. It talks about wives being submissive to their husbands. We hate that language. It makes women, and most men, bristle up inside. It’s that word submit that we have problems with. But that word doesn’t mean obey. In the original language it was written in it doesn’t mean obey. The word “submit” is appropriately translated today as revere, honor and respect. Those three words begin to capture its meaning. Notice the passage that Paul starts off by saying, **[SLIDE...]** “**Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another.**” He’s talking to men and women. The words, “courteously reverent” are the words for the Greek word, “submit.” He says, men and women, submit to each other! It’s a mutual thing, a mutual partnership.

Then he goes on to say, **[SLIDE...]** “**Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ. The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering but by cherishing.**” This doesn’t mean that you have to agree with everything your husband does! Sometimes we need our wives to get right in our faces and say, “Hey, this isn’t right! I don’t like this!” But do that with respect and in a way that will allow him to respect you. This will allow you to go a long way in doing the things you want to do individually and as a couple.

The flip side is that this only works when the husbands do what’s in the second paragraph: **[SLIDE...]** “**Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives—exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving, not getting.**” When each of you show this kind of Christ-centered respect for each other nothing can get in your way or tear you down or tear you apart.

Women, there are four things I hope you’ll take home with you from the scriptures today. **First**, speak words of grace and blessing to your husbands. **Second**, love them sacrificially as Christ loves you. **Third**, revere, honor and respect them. Sometimes that’s very hard, we men have to earn the respect of our wives and sometimes we haven’t done that, but revere honor and respect them. The **fourth** thing is to do good to him and not harm.

If you would take these home with you and look that list over every day and ask God for the grace and the strength to actually do it, you might just find that you and your husband are transformed. And for today that is the Good News. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*I thank Rev. Adam Hamilton, Sr. Pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, for his book on this subject!*