As I understand it, the assignment given to me was, basically, to come up with a Bible study that incorporated good and bad examples from marriages in the Bible. I was then to present this Bible study so that you might be able to use it. But accomplishing this was not very easy. For one, we really don’t know much about the marriages in the Bible; so when I used examples, I had to read a lot into them. (Why did they act the way they did? What were they thinking? What was the background for their situation? etc.) And two, what example in marriage should I focus on? how they carried out their roles?? how they raised a family?? how they dealt with adversity?? And three, should I limit it to just a few marriages?

Well, with these thoughts in mind, I couldn’t limit myself to one Bible study and came up with seven. And since making copies of all seven would require way too much paper work, I will make the study available through the district website.

As I look at this study, each session could easily take up more than just 1 hour, depending on how talkative the teacher and students are in the discussions. As far as the audience is concerned, you could use this study with young single adults…for pre-marital counseling…for a marriage retreat…or just as an adult Bible study.

Before going through one of the lessons with you, here is a summary each session:

**Exploring Relationship-Building for Marriage through Bible Examples**

1 – Which Love Language?

This session uses Gary Chapman’s concept of the “Five Love Languages” (words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch). In the first part, we see how Jesus carries out the five love languages in His relationship with His Church. In the second part, we are introduced to some wives of the Bible and discuss what love language each would probably have benefitted from the most in their life. This session does not take up the good, the bad, and the ugly, but sets up the class for a discussion of Bible marriages in the next six sessions.

2 – Finding a Spouse

Now is when we begin looking at the good, the bad, and the ugly examples of marriages in the Bible. The three examples I use in this session are: Isaac and Rebekah (the good)...David and Bathsheba (the bad)...and Israel and their pagan wives (the ugly). In the good example of finding a spouse for Isaac, we notice three standards for us to follow: 1) searching within the family; 2) prayer; and 3) looking for signs. Under the bad example of David and Bathsheba, we explore questions like: Who is taboo for you to pursue? What should a man do who has impregnated a woman outside of wedlock? The ugly example of the Israelite men emphasizes that the worst thing a person can do is to forsake God for the sake of a spouse.
3 – Living Out Your Roles in Marriage

Before getting to the examples in this study, we first delve into the roles that God has given to husbands and wives. Two concepts I bring out are: 1) the husband is to be the face of God on this earth; 2) the wife is to have: a) an inner attitude of desiring to help her husband; and b) an outward expression of carrying it out. The examples I use for this session are: Abraham and Sarah (the good)… then I give a twofer—Xerxes and Vashti, and Ahab and Jezebel (the bad)… and Adam and Eve (the ugly). Sarah carried out her role so well that Peter made a point of it, and tells us why she was able to do this so well. The bad examples carried out extremes from the opposite ends. From Xerxes and Ahab, husbands see how they should be respectful, yet assertive in their leadership role. The ugly example of Adam and Eve sets up for us the idea that men and women should never want to step outside their roles, as that was the very door that introduced sin into the world.

4 – Growing the Family

This session begins with a quote from Martin Luther concerning the words “Be fruitful and increase in number.” Luther says that these words were not a command from God; rather He was setting up a necessity of nature. The Fall, then, affected this natural state of creation by a) some being unable to procreate; and b) some being unwilling to procreate. The examples I use for this session are Elkanah and Hannah (the good)… Abraham and Sarah/Hagar (the bad)… and Onan and Tamar (the ugly). Elkanah and Hannah give us quite a few things to emulate when it comes to having children (the desire for it, prayer concerning it, rejoicing in spouse, dedicating child to the Lord). Abraham and Sarah give us some thoughts to avoid when it comes to having children (letting outside circumstances dictate against common sense, lack of trust). Onan and Tamar bring us into issues concerning birth control.

5 – Dealing with Spousal-Driven Adversity

This session explores the concept of how a spouse is to act when the other is making life difficult. It begins by comparing the love of a husband for his wife with the love of Christ for His Church (as brought out by Ephesians 5:25-27) in terms of courting (comparing this to Christ who lived for the Church), letting go of his past for the sake of a new life (comparing this to Christ who died for the Church), and doing what he can for her to make her radiant (comparing this to Christ who lives for the Church). The three examples I use for this session are Nabal and Abigail (the good)… David and Michal (the bad)… and Samson and his heifer (the ugly). Abigail provides us with plenty of examples of how a wife should act when the husband is being a fool. Michal shows us that we shouldn’t judge our spouse when she refuses to see the good in David’s actions. And David’s response may have been bad as well. Samson’s temper revealed that he was treating his new wife like a possession instead of his own body.

6 – When the Adversity Drives Out Peace

This session takes up the matter of divorce (when adultery is not the issue) and the seven steps that a person should take before being released from their marriage vow so as to be free to marry another. Since there are no good, bad, and ugly Bible examples of divorces, I used the trio of
wash, rinse, and repeat to show how people have dealt with the possibility of divorce. We are not to just wash that spouse right out of our hair. The three examples I use for this session are Joseph and Mary (wash)…Christ’s disciples (rinse)…and the Samaritan woman (repeat). Since Mary was not guilty of adultery, Joseph washed away any thoughts of divorce. He did not want to set up Mary to become an adulteress if she were to marry someone else. Christ rinsed off some dirt from His disciples’ thinking who thought that the best way out of a marriage was simply by giving the wife walking papers. When Jesus told them that this was not acceptable, the disciples thought it was best not to marry. But Jesus told them that this was not a good option either since not all people are eunuchs, and therefore they should get married and deal with the difficulties that marriage may bring with it. The Samaritan woman was apparently a repeat offender of adultery. Jesus’ gentle treatment of her reveals that adultery and divorce and sexual immorality are forgivable sins.

7 – Rejoicing in Your Spouse
How can we rejoice in our spouse when marriage has so many difficulties associated with it? By showing love. This session takes up a study of I Corinthians 13 where love is pictured in the everyday surroundings of a bad world where distressing influences bring out the positive power and value of love. Discussions are encouraged concerning how each of the 14 descriptions of love can be carried out by a husband and wife in a marriage. The three examples I used for this session are Adam and Eve (good)…Jacob and Leah (bad)…and Solomon and his 700 (ugly). As we look at each of these examples, we look to see which descriptions of love these three Bible husbands carried out and which ones they failed to carry out.

I have decided to present to the conference the second in the series of seven. The reason for this is that the first study does not present the good, the bad, and the ugly of Bible marriages while the second study does, and the assignment was to present the good, the bad, and the ugly from biblical examples of marriage.

EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING FOR MARRIAGE THROUGH BIBLE EXAMPLES

FINDING A SPOUSE

PROVERBS 18:22
He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

Martin Luther
To get a wife is easy enough, but to love her with constancy is difficult, and he who can do that may well be grateful to our Lord God.
Abraham was now very old, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. He said to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, “Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.”

Why would Abraham insist that someone from his family marry Isaac?

A mistake made by quite a few Christian young men and women is to set their sights away from someone who is “family.” Why would a person do this?

The ultimate purpose [of marriage] is: 1) to obey God, to find aid and counsel against sin; 2) to call upon God; 3) to seek, love, and educate children for the glory of God; 4) to live with one’s wife in the fear of God and to bear the cross; 5) but if there are no children, nevertheless to live with one’s wife in contentment; and to avoid all lewdness with others. – Martin Luther

1 – Will this person …
2 – Will this person …
3 – Will this person …
4 – Will this person …
5 – If things do not pan out as planned, will this person …

Then the servant left, taking with him ten of his master’s camels loaded with all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water. Then he prayed, “LORD, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a young woman, ‘Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too’—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.” Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah, who was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor.
v.12 – PRAY

“If any one wants to marry a wife, let him take the matter seriously and pray to our Lord God: "O Lord, if it is thy divine will that I should live without a wife, then help me to do so! If not, bestow upon me a good, pious maid, with whom I can live my whole life long, one whom I love and who loves me." – Martin Luther

v.13-14 – LOOK FOR SIGNS

What was the sign that Abraham’s servant sought?

What “signs” should you look for in searching for a spouse?

THE BAD – David and Bathsheba – 2 Samuel 11:2-5,26-27

2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” 4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. 5 The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant.” 26 When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. 27 After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

v.2 – Selfishness

A person can be smitten by any number of men or women (not only by looks, but in a variety of ways). What should be taboo?

Nothing is said about the culpability of Bathsheba. What if she had been miserable in her marriage? Would that give David a foot in the door?

Hebrews 13:4 – Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.
What if a person is miserable in their marriage and you find that the person is your perfect match?

What if the person is divorced and you find that that the person is your perfect match?

1 Corinthians 7:10-11,15 – 10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

v.5,26-27 – What should a man do if he has impregnated a woman, but there is no marriage involved?

THE UGLY – The men of Israel and their pagan wives – Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Judges 3:5-6

3 Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, 4 for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.

5 The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 6 They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

v.5-6 – Apostatizing

What is the sin of Israel that Christians should seek not to emulate?

The ultimate purpose of marriage is to obey God...
Below are the seven Bible study sessions.
Gleanings from Biblical Examples of Marriage: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly
Exploring Relationship-Building for Marriage through Biblical Examples

Session 1 – Which Love Language?

Most, if not all of you, have heard about the five love languages. The five love languages comes from a book by Gary Chapman that he wrote in 1992. The five love languages are: 1)Words of affirmation; 2)Acts of service; 3)Receiving gifts; 4)Quality time; and 5)Physical touch. Chapman argues that while each of these languages is enjoyed to some degree by all people, a person will usually speak one primary language, but all are important and can be ranked after taking a love language profile. These love languages are not only for relationships between husbands and wives, but for all types of relationships.

This morning, we are going to test and see if Jesus carries out these five love languages in his relationship with His Church. After all, there is no greater communicator of love than Jesus. It’s His communicating of love for us that we want to emulate, not just some human author’s concept of what such communicating ought to be.

And then after that, we will be exploring several marriages in the Bible and asking ourselves: “What love language would (person’s name) have benefitted from?”

So first, let’s dive into the ways that Christ communicates His love for us. Does He follow the five languages of love as spelled out by Gary Chapman? Let’s check it out:

**Words of Affirmation – the means of grace**

(We use words of affirmation to acknowledge our recognition and appreciation of someone’s good qualities, and to confirm the special feelings we have for each other. Such words can inspire the other person to see themselves in a more positive way and encourage them to achieve more in life.)

With us being sinners from conception, and Jesus being the perfect God from all eternity, it is impossible for Him to see good qualities that lie within us. So how does Jesus use words of affirmation with us?

A)He gave the Keys to be used for His Church. (Mt 16:19) The Keys are Jesus’ positive reinforcements, telling us that we are forgiven and righteous. This is the encouragement we need so that we see ourselves in a more positive way and so that we strive to achieve more in life. Without this constant word of affirmation, we would be ridden by the monster called guilt.

A)He gives us the benedictions. (Num 6:24-26) (Eph 1:2) These words also give us the positive reinforcement of His love for us.

A)He also tells us that through Christ our works are like fruit. We are His temple (Eph 2:20-21). We are His chosen ones (Eph 1:4-6), etc.
Acts of Service – *the kingdom of God*
We certainly do not deserve any acts of service from Christ. But since He has given us the great service of atonement and then gave us faith by the power of His Spirit, Christ has put us in a position in which we are served by Him. What are the acts of service that we receive from Christ?

A) We can summarize His acts of service to us by reviewing His kingship. Through faith in Christ we are in the kingdom of God, and Jesus is ruling as the King. His kingship can be broken down into two categories: 1) The spiritual work that He does within each of His believers (Mt 13:23,31-32; 18:27; 20:15); and 2) the worldly work that He does for the benefit of His believers to carry out His predestination of each. (Eph 1:22-23).

A) We should emphasize that the atonement and conversion were the first two great acts of service that Christ has done for us. I did not include them here because I was looking for an answer that leaned more towards continuing acts of service.

Receiving Gifts – *the gifts of the Spirit*
To carry out the concept of the five love languages, I have considered the Keys and the benedicitions to be words of affirmation. Now think of the gifts that we have as a result of these words of affirmation and as a result of the acts of service that Christ gives us. What gifts do we receive from Christ?


Quality Time – *fellowship*
Quality time describes a relationship in which both parties are putting in time and effort for the sake of the relationship. When does Jesus give us this quality time?

A) Worship (Hebrews 10:22-25) and prayer (1 Peter 3:12). In the worship service, God welcomes us into His house at the very beginning of the service so that He can speak words of affirmation to us, serve us, give us gifts, and touch us (*as we will see in the next love language*). In the worship service, we can also sing our praises of Him. In prayer, Jesus gives us the opportunity to speak with Him at any time, and He will listen.

Physical Touch – *the sacraments*
Well, this is where we must say that this is not occurring, right? Actually, no. Even this love language is being used by Christ for His Church. When does Jesus physically touch us?

A) In Baptism Christ enfolds us (Galatians 3:27) and the Spirit comes on us (Titus 3:5-6) and gives birth to us (John 3:5). In Communion He kisses us (Matthew 26:26-28).
Now let’s go into the second part of the lesson in which we will try to get to understand better the people of the Bible. They were human beings with a wide variety of emotions, just like us. But we are never given a lot of information about their unique personalities within their marriages. So let’s have some fun with it and try to analyze them from what we know about them. Every love language ought to be shown to every person. I think we can agree on that. But according to Gary Chapman, there are some love languages that will be craved more than others. I have divided y’all into 4 different groups. I’m going to give each group a name from the Bible. I want you to consider that person. What do you know about him/her? And then from this knowledge that you have of that person, figure out among your group what love language you think that person would have craved the most from his/her spouse. Make sure you are able to tell the rest of the class why you think that way.

Example – Eve
Group #2 – Rebekah (Gen 24:15-20; 26:7; 26:8; 27:5-17; 27:46)
Group #3 – Leah (Gen 29:16-18,25,30-34; 30:9-12; 30:16-20)
Group #4 – Rachel (Gen 30:1-8; 30:14-15; 30:22-24; 31:19)

Eve must have been a very depressed woman at times. For although she was the mother of all the living since through her the Savior would be born, yet she would have to live with the thought every day of her 900 years or so of existence that she had brought crap into the world. (Eve craved words of affirmation from Adam. This he did by naming her Eve.)

Sarah would do anything her husband told her to do. She was not shy to say what she wanted. She had been waiting a long time to have a child and was giving up. She was very protective of what she had. (Sarah loved the gifts she had and would do anything to get them as well as keep them.)

Rebekah was a pleaser. Unlike Sarah, Rebekah was not told to say she was a sister. Rebekah was a cuddler. Rebekah would resort to trickery to get what she wanted (or, what was right). Rebekah expected the best from her sons. (Rebekah was all about doing what was best in any given situation. She knew what to do. Such a person will not crave much except for people to understand how right they are. This would require Isaac’s time.)

Leah felt very unloved since Jacob loved Rachel more than her. She craved happiness as though it could only come from Jacob. She did what she could in order to get the attention she craved from Jacob. (Leah had competition with a sister who had it all. She was very down on herself and relied heavily on one single thing that would fulfill her—children. Leah craved physical touch.)

Rachel had it all, but if someone posed a risk to this, she would do her best to make sure she still had it all. Rachel was not happy unless she was the center of attention. Nobody better up Rachel. (Rachel craved words of affirmation that she was indeed the cat’s meow.)

1 – Words of affirmation (Rachel)  4 – Quality time (Rebekah)
2 – Acts of service  5 – Physical touch (Leah)
3 – Receiving gifts (Sarah)
EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING FOR MARRIAGE THROUGH BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Session 2 – FINDING A SPOUSE

They say that 50% of all marriages end up in divorce (although some say it is more like 30%), and that the statistics don’t really change at all when comparing those marriages within the church to those outside the church. The class today is set up to try to help put an end to that sad statistic, at least as far as our families are concerned. Today we are going to look at finding the right spouse so that at least we might start on a firm foundation—or at least as firm as we can make it since we are dealing with sinful human beings.

Finding a spouse was no easy task in Bible days either. We will be looking at 3 examples of people finding a spouse—a good example, a bad example, and an ugly example.

Notice what Solomon says in Proverbs 18 concerning finding a wife. Let’s read it together:

PROVERBS 18:22
He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

Marriage is given to us by God as a blessing, but so often that blessing can be ripped to shreds by sinful human beings. This is why Luther wrote what he did. Let’s read those words together as well:

Martin Luther
To get a wife is easy enough, but to love her with constancy is difficult, and he who can do that may well be grateful to our Lord God.

So then, what is going to best serve us in loving a spouse with constancy? It begins with finding the right kind of spouse. But how do we do that? Let’s look at the good, the bad, and the ugly of finding a spouse as presented to us in the marriages of Isaac and Rebekah...David and Bathsheba. ...and Israel and their pagan wives.

The bulk of our study will be with the good example, as we see Abraham and his servant search for a spouse for Isaac. In this we will see 3 concepts that will do us well when we are looking for a spouse for ourselves or our children. Those 3 concepts are: 1)Search ‘within the family’; 2)Pray; and 3)Look for signs.
Abraham wanted his son Isaac to have a wife from his own family. Abraham was the son of Terah. Isaac was Terah’s grandson. Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel who was the son of Nahor who was the son of Terah. Rebekah was the great-granddaughter of Terah.

THE GOOD – Isaac and Rebekah – Genesis 24:1-4,10-15

v.3-4 – Search “within the family”

Why would Abraham insist that someone from his family marry Isaac?

1 – It would be someone whom Abraham could trust
2 – It would be someone who wouldn’t be a threat to Isaac’s faith.

To compare Abraham’s search for a spouse to our search for a spouse, we too should be looking for someone that we can trust and who won’t be a threat to our faith.

A mistake made by quite a few Christian young men and women is to set their sights away from someone who is “family.” Why would a person do this?

They are not taking the right things into consideration.

Look at Luther’s quote below. What things ought to be considered when looking for a spouse?

The ultimate purpose [of marriage] is: 1) to obey God, to find aid and counsel against sin; 2) to call upon God; 3) to seek, love, and educate children for the glory of God; 4) to live with one’s wife in the fear of God and to bear the cross; 5) but if there are no children, nevertheless to live with one’s wife in contentment; and to avoid all lewdness with others.

1 – Will this person help me to obey God? Hinder me? Tempt me?
2 – Will this person pray to God with me?
3 – Will this person be a good parent, leading our children to God?
4 – Will this person turn to God in hard times and encourage the same for me?
5 – If things do not pan out as planned, will this person be content?

Did you ever make a point of it to find a spouse from within your “family”?

v.12 – Pray

There is no bigger decision in all of life since the choice of a spouse will steer the rest of your life’s decisions and choices.
Look at Luther’s quote below.
"If any one wants to marry a wife, let him take the matter seriously and pray to our Lord God: "O Lord, if it is thy divine will that I should live without a wife, then help me to do so! If not, bestow upon me a good, pious maid, with whom I can live my whole life long, one whom I love and who loves me."

Did you ever pray for God to give you a spouse? I don’t remember how often I prayed for a wife, but I do remember one time in which I basically gave up thinking I would ever have one. I was almost 28 years old at the time, traveling down to the San Diego area for a stewardship workshop for the southern California WELS congregations. In prayer to God I asked him to keep me focused on the task at hand and not be looking for possible girlfriends. Apparently, God heard my heart’s desire and not my words. Over 22 years ago, God put my future wife in a pew right behind me all alone.

v.13-14 – Look for signs

What was the sign that Abraham’s servant sought?
Notice that he didn’t ask for the first woman who would trip over a rock or behind whom the sun would shine making her look like an angel. He was looking for a hard-working woman who took notice of a need and desired to fulfill that need.

What “signs” should you look for in searching for a spouse?
Don’t look for things outside the person—like the perfect sunset or something in nature or some fluke incident that occurs on some specific date. The signs to look for are the person’s personality, actions, and faith. Signs that give answers to the five considerations to be given when looking for a spouse.

THE BAD – David and Bathsheba – 2 Samuel 11:2-5,26-27

If this is the bad, the ugly must be really ugly. For what we have here is a man (David) who already had at least seven wives…maybe even 18 wives and concubines total (2 Sam 3:2-5; 5:13-16). And yet he sleeps with the wife of one of his close companions (2 Sam 23:8,34,39), impregnating her, killing him, and then marrying her. She was also the daughter of one of his close companions.

v.2 – Selfishness

A person can be smitten by any number of men or women (not only by looks, but in a variety of ways). What should be taboo?
We shouldn’t even consider it if the person is already spoken for (married…engaged?…going steady??…dating?????)

Nothing is said about the culpability of Bathsheba. What if she had been miserable in her marriage? Would that give David a foot in the door? (Hebrews 13:4)

What if a person is miserable in their marriage and you find that the person is your perfect match? (Hebrews 13:4 – read together)

What if the person is divorced and you find that that the person is your perfect match? (1 Corinthians 7:10-11,15 present the two concepts we need to keep in mind when considering this.)

v.5,26-27 – What should a man do if he has impregnated a woman, but there is no marriage involved?

In the OT, the man was commanded to marry her even if she didn’t become pregnant…unless, that is, if the woman’s father refused to give her to the man (Ex 22:16-17). If the woman was married, the man and woman were to be stoned (Dt 22:22-23).

These laws of Israel do not apply to us. Therefore we do not kill adulterers or force people to marry after they have fornicated. But keeping these laws of Israel in mind may sway our decision since these were laws that came from God where culture wouldn’t make a difference. (goat’s milk)

The honorable thing to do would be to marry, unless parents must be involved and say no. But if the other person is not from “within the family” then the wise and honorable thing would be to step away. If you are the man, and the woman is not from “within the family” the honorable thing would be to help with the responsibilities for the child.

THE UGLY – The men of Israel and their pagan wives – Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Judges 3:5-6

v.5-6 – Apostatizing

What is the sin of Israel that Christians should seek not to emulate?

They left the true God for the sake of a spouse. Compared to David’s bad way of finding a spouse, I call this ugly because they left God. David did not leave God.

*The ultimate purpose of marriage is to obey God...*
EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING FOR MARRIAGE THROUGH BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Session 3 – LIVING OUT YOUR ROLES IN MARRIAGE

This morning we are going to consider the roles of husbands and wives. They are laid out for us succinctly in Ephesians 5. Let’s read verses 22 and 23 together.

**EPHESIANS 5:22,23a**

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.
23 For the husband is the head of the wife.

Before these verses, Paul had told all the believers to submit to one another. And so what we have, then, from these verses is that the husband should be a servant-head and the wife should be a servant-submitter. But now, before we get into the good, the bad, and the ugly of some marriages in the Bible concerning the roles of husbands and wives, it would serve us well to delve more into what those roles are so that we can carry them out with more clarity. What does it mean that the husband is head and the wife is submitter? To find this out we go to where the roles were first given—Genesis.

THE ROLES GIVEN

**Genesis 1:26**

26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

**Genesis 2:16-17**

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

What does God tell us in these verses about why He created man (Adam)?
**Man was to be God on earth—the face of God to all God’s creation. Yet he himself was not the God, for he was to worship and serve God.**

**Genesis 2:18**

18 The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

What does God tell us here about why He created woman?
**He created her to be a helper. She was to help the man be God on earth. She was to help the man worship and serve God.**
Genesis 1:27-28
27 So God created man\textit{kind} in his own image, in the image of God he created \textit{them}; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

God tells us here that both the man and the woman were God on earth. They were holy like God and they ruled over the creation. But while both were God to the creation, yet they had different roles. Man was to be the face of God. Woman was to be the helper. Maybe we can compare these roles to the roles of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Both are God, but the Son is the face of God while the Spirit helps the Son be the face.

Genesis 3:17
17 To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ Cursed is the ground because of you.”

What was the sin that God chastised Adam for?
He ate the fruit that he wasn’t supposed to eat. And in doing so, he let the woman take authority over him, even though he knew better, and he submitted to her.

Genesis 3:16b
16 To the woman he said, “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

The word for “rule over” is first used in Genesis 1:16 where it says that the greater light (sun) would “govern” the day. It has the general meaning of “being in charge of.”

What command does God give here to the woman?
This can be read in a few different ways. 1) God was commanding that she desire (have an inner attitude) to help her husband and let (have an outward expression) him be the one in charge, as it was meant to be from the beginning; 2) God was telling her that while she desired to rule over her husband, he would rule over her. ~ I prefer #1.

Colossians 3:18
18 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Paul, here, is basically summarizing what God said in Genesis 3:16b if that is seen as a command rather than a curse. Have an inner attitude towards him and an outward expression that reveals his leadership role.
THE ROLES ENFORCED

1 Timothy 2:12-14
12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

When Paul tells Timothy that a woman should not assume authority over a man, what does he point out as the reasoning?

Because Adam was formed first, and then Eve…for Adam. Paul takes us back to Genesis 2:18 where the woman was created to be a helper for the man.

Why would Paul mention what he does in verse 14?

He was not pointing out that women are more easily deceived. Rather, he is taking us back to the time of the first sin which was brought on because Adam, even though he knew better (he was not deceived), yielded to Eve’s assumption of authority in the carrying out of their worship. It was through this yielding of his authority that the first sin occurred, bringing sin and death into the world.

But what if, unlike Adam and Eve, no other sin is involved when the woman takes authority…is it okay, then, for her to do so?

The point is not the taking of authority in order to sin, as if that is when a man should not yield authority to a woman. The point is that the woman was created FOR the man. Any reminder of that first disregard of God’s roles is a reminder of the worst point in world history. It was through this role reversal that God had to have His Son crucified. It’s like rubbing salt into a wound when men and women do not take on the roles that God gave them. What will keep God from punishing/disciplining when He sees this occurring in a family…in a church…in a country?? How long are you willing to test His patience??

We will strive for still more clarity in the carrying out of these roles as we look at the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of living out our God-given roles as husbands and wives as presented to us in the marriages of Abraham and Sarah…Xerxes and Vashti…Ahab and Jezebel…and Adam and Eve.

1 Timothy 2:11
11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

This verse expresses two concepts about the role of a woman in this world.

1) it should be carried out in quietness—an inner attitude which refuses to speak out against someone; and
2) it should be carried out in full submission—an outward expression that reveals a desire for another to be held in high regard
It is these two concepts that we will see in Sarah. As we look at her relationship with Abraham, we will see that hers was a character of quietness and full submission. Genesis 18 takes us to the time when Sarah was 89 years old. She still had no sign of having a baby and had given up on the idea that she herself would have a baby. Abraham, though, was being visited by 3 people—God and 2 angels in human form. The following is the conversation that takes place between God and Abraham.

GOOD – Abraham and Sarah – Genesis 18:9-12 and 1 Peter 3:1-6

9 “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There, in the tent,” he said. 10 Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

Where is it in this story that Sarah displays a good example of living out her role as a wife to Abraham?

Rather peculiar that we see such a thing when the main concept is that Sarah doubted the Lord’s promise really meant her as the mother. But notice what she said here. She referred to Abraham as her “lord.” This implies an obvious quietness and submission on her part. For we notice here that Sarah did not call him this sarcastically or as a show, for she said it to herself. This was how she truly considered it to be.

Peter took this up in his letter.

3 1 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Notice the two concepts that Peter makes note of:
1) the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (v4); and

2) submitted themselves (v5). These are the same two concepts that Paul spoke to Timothy and that God commanded Eve (desire=inward attitude; and rule over=outward expression).

Notice what special characteristic Peter says gives women like Sarah the ability to be quiet and submissive.
They put their hope in God.
Having seen a good example of how the wife is to play out her God-given role, let’s take a look at how the husband is to carry out his God-given role by taking a peek at a couple husbands who didn’t do it right at all. We will first look at King Xerxes—the one who would take Esther as his wife. But before that, he was married to Vashti. Let’s first look at a verse which Xerxes did not follow.

1 Peter 3:7

7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect.

BAD – Xerxes and Vashti – Esther 1:10-12

10 On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him 11 to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. 12 But when the attendants delivered the king’s command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

Why would Xerxes want to show off the queen to all these princes and nobles?
He was drunk and treated her like a possession. He was not considerate or respectful to her, probably wanting her to show off more than just her pretty eyes.

– Love and Respect
God doesn’t tell husbands to make sure that their wives submit.
The role the husband has is not a license for him to dominate.
The role the husband has is not for the sake of him being able to do things HIS way.

“All my life is patience. I have to have patience with the pope, the heretics, my family, and Katie.”

The next bad example from which we learn how husbands are to carry out their role comes from a king of Israel named Ahab who married a bad woman named Jezebel.

BAD – Ahab and Jezebel – 1 Kings 16:31-32; 19:1-2; 21:4-8

16 31 He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. 32 He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria.

19 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”
21 So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors.” He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. 5 His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, “Why are you so sullen? Why won’t you eat?” 6 He answered her, “Because I said to Naboth, ‘Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.’ But he said, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’” 7 Jezebel his wife said, “Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I’ll get you the vineyard of Naboth.” 8 So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth’s city with him.

From these three stories, we see a major flaw in Ahab’s carrying out of his role as husband. What was it?

**He failed to run the household when it came to spiritual things and when it came to other affairs as well, and instead let Jezebel take complete authority.**

| Be assertive in your leadership |
| This is especially true when it comes to spiritual needs of family. |
| You are not just a figurehead who sits on his throne in indifference. |

**In the ugly example, we will focus in on both Adam and Eve’s ugly examples of assertiveness and lack of it. Martin Luther called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “Adam’s altar and pulpit.” Why? Because after the command was given, Adam and Eve had the opportunity to respond to God in obedience. They had a chance to say thank you to their creator. They had opportunity to worship God by what they did. It was there at their worship center that Eve would assert her authority and Adam would yield his authority.**

**UGLY – Adam and Eve – Genesis 3:1-6**

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” 2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” 4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

This takes us back once again to the first time that the roles of husband and wife were jilted. This was ugly because of what it did, bringing sin and death into the world, making life possible only at the sacrifice of God’s Son. It seemed so simple and non-threatening. Yet what Eve did is something that no Christian woman should ever want to repeat. And what Adam did is something that no Christian man should ever want to repeat.
These words are from the creation account in Genesis 1. What were these words concerning? God was speaking about the sea creatures. The exact same words are used with Adam and Eve in verse 28 with the exception that it says, “and said to them...” The fact that God said it both concerning the fish and man implies that this was not so much a command that God gave to man, but more so a simple state of the way things were going to be. They were going to procreate. There was only one command that God gave during the week of creation (2:16,17). Even the man working (2:15) and woman being a helper (2:18) was not a command. It was the nature of things from God’s creation, which then became a command after the Fall (3:16,19).

For this word which God speaks, “Be fruitful and increase in number,” is not a command. It is more than a command, namely, a divine ordinance which it is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore. Rather, it is just as necessary as the fact that I am a man, and more necessary than sleeping and waking, eating and drinking, and emptying the bowels and bladder. It is a nature and disposition just as innate as the organs involved in it. Therefore, just as God does not command anyone to be a man or a woman but creates them the way they have to be, so he does not command them to multiply but creates them so that they have to multiply. And wherever men try to resist this, it remains irresistible nonetheless and goes its way through fornication, adultery, and secret sins, for this is a matter of nature and not of choice. – *Martin Luther, the Estate of Marriage, 1522*

Is it a sin to go against the nature of things as God created them? **Only if God makes the natural thing a command (e.g. man must work and woman must submit). As far as procreating, though, it’s not so much a sin as it is sad to see people not taking part in it. Martin Luther says that sinning occurs in connection with resisting this natural state of things.**

*{Read 1 Corinthians 11:14-16 where Paul talks about the natural state of things.*

14 Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. 16 If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

Paul says that it is natural for a man to have short hair and a woman to have long hair since the long hair reveals a submissiveness to the man, reflecting the natural state of things as set up by God’s creation. Does Paul say that it is a sin for a man to have long hair or a woman short hair? **Not so much a sin as it as sad to see such a thing occurring. They had no such practice there or in any of the churches, for it was not a command from God.}
God set up the nature of things at creation. He did so for the sake of order and goodness. To submit to this natural order of things by procreating in marriage, will bring the greatest blessings. To go against this natural order of things is at best, sad, but at worst an entryway for sins of all kinds.

How did the Fall affect this natural state of creation?

1) Some people are not able to procreate;
2) Some people are not willing to procreate.

The Fall into sin has brought about some sad consequences when it comes to following the natural state of creation. How sad are people when they aren’t able to have children? Yet this is what the Fall into sin has brought into many people’s lives. Sin messes with God’s natural state of the procreation process. So also with those who do not want to have children. This is sad too. Yet this is what sin can bring into people’s lives. It messes up their minds concerning God’s natural state of the procreation process.

Look at the following passages.

**PROVERBS 18:22**

22 He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

**PSALM 127:3-5**

3 “Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him.
4 Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth.
5 Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.

Both a wife and children are considered to be blessings from the Lord, not commands. Is it a sin to turn down a blessing?

**Once again, it would be a sad thing first and foremost. Do we throw away other blessings from the Lord? Wouldn’t the saddest blessing to throw away be the one that God uplifts the most? – wife and children.**

Read the following verse from Malachi. What does this say to believers about procreation?

**MALACHI 2:14b,15a**

You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.
15 Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring.

It says that the purpose for procreation is to bring people into this world who love and worship the true God.
"God has produced from me and my wife Katie a little heathen." – Martin Luther, 1527

What does Luther mean to be saying about calling his kid a little heathen?

All children are born sinful, enemies of God, haters of God’s will. It is the believer’s joy to be able to bring little heathens into this world, and to bring the gospel in Word and Sacrament to them so that they become saints. Luther follows up this quote by saying to a lady… “We hope you will be willing to become her spiritual mother and help make her a Christian.”

What makes not following the natural state of creation even more sad for a believer?

Along with Christ, it is our greatest desire to bring people into the kingdom of God. Through the natural state of creation, God gives us evangelism prospects that we can lead to the cross.

But the greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. – Martin Luther, the Estate of Marriage, 1522

So what should we do if we find ourselves as husband and wife dealing with either of these unnatural state of things—not being able to procreate/not being willing to procreate?

We will look into this question by looking at the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly examples of growing a family as seen in some marriages in the Bible.

Our first example concerns those who are unable to procreate. We look at Hannah and Elkanah. Hannah’s inability to have children was enhanced by the fact that Elkanah’s other wife, Peninnah, was able to have many children.

GOOD – Elkanah and Hannah – 1 Samuel 1:1-16,19-20

1 There was a certain man from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah. 2 He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. 3 Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. 4 Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. 5 But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. 6 Because the LORD had closed Hannah’s womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. 7 This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. 8 Her husband Elkanah would say to her, “Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don’t you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don’t I mean more to you than ten sons?” 9 Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his chair
by the doorpost of the LORD’s house. 10 In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the LORD, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, “LORD Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life...” 12 As she kept on praying to the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14 and said to her, “How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine.” 15 “Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. 16 Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.” ...

Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the LORD and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. 20 So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, “Because I asked the LORD for him.”

As you look at this story, what good from Hannah and Elkanah could a married couple emulate?

– A desire for a family is a desire for one of God’s greatest blessings
– Seek to grow your family through prayer. Maybe God is delaying the growth of your family.
– Rejoice in your spouse when you are told that you are unable to have kids
– Understand that the main desire to have for your child is that he/she be the Lord’s.

Sarah was in a similar situation to that of Hannah in that it appeared that she would never have a child. Now while it would be unfair to say that she never prayed for a child, yet we only know of something she and Abraham did that might be considered bad.

BAD – Abraham and Sarah/Hagar – Genesis 16:1-6

1 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; 2 so she said to Abram, “The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.” Abram agreed to what Sarai said. 3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. 4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.” 6 “Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.”

As you consider Sarah’s and Abraham’s choice, maybe some of the following questions may help.

Consider Genesis 12:10-20 for the next 3 questions.
Where did Abraham and Sarah get Hagar from? (12:16)
Abraham had most likely gotten Hagar as a servant when he was in Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20). It was there that he told Sarah to say that she was Abraham’s sister. As a result, Pharaoh treated Abraham very generously in exchange for Sarah, even giving him maidservants.

Why would Sarah suggest to Abraham that he have a child with Hagar (16:2)? (12:20)
Sarah may have been thinking that God had a purpose for the episode in Egypt—in order to bring Hagar into the picture so that Sarah could have a son through Hagar.

How could Sarah blame Abraham (16:5)? (12:13,15,19)
When Hagar became pregnant and despised Sarah, she felt that Abraham was to blame. For it was he who brought Hagar into the picture to begin with by prostituting Sarah with Pharaoh, making her think that there was a reason for it.

As you look at this story, what can a husband and wife take away from it as they deal with the possibility of not being able to have children?

– Don’t try to read into events as an excuse for going against common sanctified sense
– Place your trust in the Lord
– Recognize that the Lord is in control

These past two examples have been concerning those who were not able to procreate, but sincerely wanted to, recognizing that children are a precious blessing from God. This next couple is the only one in the Bible where someone does not want a child—Onan.

UGLY – Onan and Tamar – Genesis 38:6-10

6 Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. 7 But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the LORD’s sight; so the LORD put him to death. 8 Then Judah said to Onan, “Sleep with your brother’s wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother.” 9 But Onan knew that the child would not be his; so whenever he slept with his brother’s wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from providing offspring for his brother. 10 What he did was wicked in the LORD’s sight; so the LORD put him to death also.

Concerning what this story is talking about, see Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

5 If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. 6 The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. 7 However, if a man does not want to marry his brother’s wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, “My
husband's brother refuses to carry on his brother's name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me.” 8. Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, “I do not want to marry her,” 9 his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, “This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line.” 10 That man’s line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsanded.

What was Onan’s sin that brought God to kill him?

Onan had no problem using Tamar to pleasure himself, but refused to carry out his responsibility to his brother and Tamar by having a child with her. His motive and attitude was sinful. He wanted the inheritance all to himself instead of sharing it with Tamar and her son. He wanted the pleasure of sleeping with Tamar without the responsibility a child would bring.

– Motives and attitudes

"...in the human race there are few who regard a woman's fertility as a blessing. Indeed, there are many who have an aversion for it and regard sterility as a special blessing. Surely this is also contrary to nature. Much less is it pious and saintly. For this affection has been implanted by God in man's nature, so that it desires its increase and multiplication. Accordingly, it is inhuman and godless to have a loathing for offspring. Thus someone recently called his wife a sow, since she gave birth rather often. The good for nothing and impure fellow! The saintly fathers did not feel like this at all; for they acknowledged a fruitful wife as a special blessing of God and, on the other hand, regarded sterility as a curse. And this judgment flowed from the Word of God in Gen. 1:28, where He said: 'Be fruitful and multiply.' From this they understood that children are a gift of God." – Martin Luther

Based on the story of Onan and what the Bible says about procreation (it is the natural state of creation and it is a blessing), is it always sinful to use birth control?

- Selfish motives are certainly not pleasing to God.
- Putting career and the pursuit of worldly gain ahead of having a family is not pleasing.
- Not trusting Him to take care of our situation is not pleasing. We must place our faith in Him and rely on Him to guide us through all situations and decisions that arise in life.

There may be times and instances when using birth control in marriage is acting wisely (never outside of marriage). Does the wife have a medical condition that is intensified during pregnancy? Would she face medical risks? Are economic factors such that our kid would be a drag on society? Is the emotional stability of the possible parent too erratic?
“Although it is very easy to marry a wife, it is very difficult to support her along with the children and the household. Indeed, many hate fertility in a wife for the sole reason that the offspring must be supported and brought up. For this is what they commonly say: ‘Why should I marry a wife when I am a pauper and a beggar? I would rather bear the burden of poverty alone and not load myself with misery and want.’ But this blame is unjustly fastened on marriage and fruitfulness. Indeed, you are indicting your unbelief by distrusting God’s goodness, and you are bringing greater misery upon yourself by disparaging God’s blessing. For if you had trust in God’s grace and promises, you would undoubtedly be supported. But because you do not hope in the Lord, you will never prosper.” – Martin Luther

Consider the following concerning birth control:

1. Birth control is our attempt to exercise stewardship over the blessing of having children. Once married and enjoying sexual intimacy God may still wish for you to have children, even when practicing some form of birth control. Never surrender your faith in the providence of God and place your trust in your own methods. If God should still provide you with one or more children even while using birth control, have a heart of faith that accepts the blessing with joy.

2. When considering birth control people often want the most certain method of assuring no birth. All artificial and natural forms of birth control have failure rates – some more or less than others. Only abstinence is a 100% certain form of birth control.

3. Natural family planning methods do not introduce any foreign elements into the practice of birth control. It is an excellent and natural way to monitor fertility cycles and is often used by people who are trying to become pregnant as well as those wishing to avoid pregnancy.

4. Barrier methods (condoms, cervical caps, etc.) are less convenient but do not introduce any chemicals which can be problematic both to the health of the woman or the life of a developing child.

5. Chemical methods (pills, patches, injections, etc.) all operate by three methods according to the manufacturers and the FDA:
   
   o Inhibit ovulation so that an egg is not released
   o Prevent or inhibit passage of sperm into the vaginal area by a thickening of the mucous in the cervix
   o Change the lining of the endometrium to prevent implantation or dislodge the implantation of a developing child

It is the third mechanism that is the problem. Opinions are often sharply divided as to how often or if ever the third mechanism goes into effect. What we do know for sure is that the third mechanism is listed as a way that chemical birth control can work. We just do not know how often or whether it acts in that way. You should be aware of this as you consider your options. And, always have a very candid discussion with your physician on these matters so that you know exactly what you are using and how it will work.
EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING FOR MARRIAGE THROUGH BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Session 5 – DEALING WITH SPOUSAL-DRIVEN ADVERSITY

For this class, you may consider dividing them into 4 sections. Married men ... Single people ... Couples ... Married women

PROVERBS 12:4
A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown,
but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.

PROVERBS 19:13
A quarrelsome wife is like the constant dripping of a leaky roof.

"All my life is patience. I have to have patience with the pope, the heretics, my family, and Katie." But as Bainton rightly observes, Martin "recognized that it was good for him."

EPHESIANS 5:25-33

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 
26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 
27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, 
without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Discuss the love of Christ for His “wife.”

1) He lived for her (v.25) in order that she might be His alone

2) He died for her (v.25) in order that she might be His alone

3) He lives for her (v.26-27) so that He might always see her as radiant and beautiful

Compare this love of Christ for His “wife” to the love that a husband is to show his wife.

1) He courted her, doing all within his power to get her to fall in love with him in order that he might be able to make her his, and his alone.

2) He let go of his past ways, realizing that those things could no longer control his life and actions since he had added a new dynamic into his life. She is now his.

3) The whole purpose of doing 1 & 2 was so that he might set apart this special person in his life as his most prized possession (Hebrew ba’al means to marry or possess), doing what he can for her so that she always appears radiant to him. He did not “love” her and “die for” her in order to take advantage of her.
In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

What additional aspect of Christ’s love for His wife is added here that husbands are to understand? Verses 25-27 are to be taken as a unit. (He loved…He died…He makes holy and radiant), with the emphasis on the present state of Christ’s love, not what He did in the past. That is what the following verses (28-33) reveal. That just as the Church is the body of Christ, so also the wife is one with her husband, and he therefore ought to treat her as he treats his own body. Since the church is one with Christ, what we do reflects on Christ. Since the wife is one with her husband, what she does reflects on her husband.

According to these verses, then, what should a man keep in mind when he marries a woman?

He is doing so in order to treat someone like he treats himself, and do it in such a way that the woman always appears radiant and beautiful in his own eyes. Her beauty is then the extension of himself…kind of like the sun’s rays are an extension of the sun. Think of how much you can know about a man by considering his wife.

"The first love is drunken. When the intoxication wears off, then comes the real marriage love." – Martin Luther

Let’s have fun. See what your group can come up with. Come up with two specifics on how you think a husband can make his wife radiant and beautiful in his own eyes so that she then reflects the beauty of her husband. The other groups will then rate your group’s answers. If it helps you in the thought process, you might want to consider the 5 love languages.

Words of affirmation … Acts of service … Quality time … Physical touch … Receiving gifts

...and the wife must respect her husband.

Tit for tat. See what your group can come up with. Come up with two specifics on how you think a wife can reflect the beauty of her husband. The other groups will again rate your group’s answers.

Obviously, the love and respect that Christ calls for in these verses from Ephesians meets up with a lot of opposition from the way we live our lives. Husbands may live lives that refuse to put their single days to death…they may be more willing to make their wife gloomy rather than radiant. And wives may be more willing to reflect the dark side of their husband rather than the bright side. Today we will look at the good, the bad, and the ugly of married couples in the Bible in how they carry out the love and respect that Christ calls for when the other spouse fails on their part.

David was running from Saul. At this time he had a group of 600 men running with him. They stayed by a wealthy man named Nabal who owned 1000 goats and 3000 sheep. David could have easily stolen things from Nabal or forced his shepherds to give them sheep, but instead, David’s men protected them. So David figured that Nabal would be more than glad to thank David with some gifts of food if he made the request.

Read verses 10-11

When David heard this reply from Nabal, he was ready to kill Nabal. In the meantime, word came to Abigail, Nabal’s wife, what Nabal had done and what David was going to do.

Read verses 18-19, 23-25, 28-31

Evaluate Abigail’s actions concerning her husband's foolishness.

1 – She did what he wouldn’t do in order to protect him (v18)
2 – She didn’t tell Nabal about this in order to protect him (v19)
3 – She took the blame for not noticing David’s men (v24,25b)
4 – She made no excuses for Nabal in order that David might see the futility of taking vengeance against Nabal (v31)
5 – She complimented David in order to strengthen Nabal (v31b)

BAD – David and Michal – 2 Samuel 6:12-23 – David loved the Lord. Michal failed to let that love shine.

David wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the City of David. At the time it was at the home of a man named Obed-Edom who, for the 3 months that the Ark was there, was experiencing great fortune. David was very excited to have the Ark nearby him.

Read verses 12-23

Describe David’s joy over having the Ark of God in his city.

Verses 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22 reveal the joy he had. This joy was a good thing. It was one of the greatest strengths that David had—one that caused God to see David as such a great man.

What could Michal have done to reflect this great strength of David?

She could have gone with him to bring the Ark to the City of David. She could have danced and celebrated with him. But instead, she only got disgusted with him.
What do you think of David’s reaction to Michal?

He patiently answered her, trying to reveal to her that he had a great joy and love for the Lord. The last verse is interesting. Why do you think it mentions this? Was it a punishment from God or from David for her lack of love and respect.


Samson chose a Philistine woman to marry. To celebrate the marriage, Samson set up a week long party and he had 30 Philistine men who were given to him to watch him and make sure he didn’t cause trouble. Samson was not about to let these men do their job and not pay a price, so he tells them a riddle and makes a bet with them that they can’t answer it.

Read verses 12-20

How did Samson fail to show love to his wife?
The wedding feast was not about his love for her, it was about his revenge against the Philistines for putting 30 watchdogs around him. He didn’t care about his wife’s feelings or the trouble that he was putting her into. He then just left her behind so that his wife was given to the best man at his wedding.

Read 15:1. What does this add about Samson’s love for his wife?
He was treating her like any other possession rather than one whom he wanted to stand out as radiant and beautiful.
EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING FOR MARRIAGE THROUGH BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Session 6 – WHEN THE ADVERSITY DRIVES OUT PEACE

Matthew 18:15-17
15 “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

What is Jesus telling us here? These are the steps that Jesus tells us to take when a person is continuing in a sin.

Put this into a marriage situation where the sin of a spouse is affecting the well-being of the other spouse. What should the afflicted spouse do? Speak to the spouse about the sin in hopes of repentance. Speak to a fellow believer about the situation so that he/she might talk to the spouse in hopes of repentance. Go to the pastor and tell him so that he might talk to the spouse in hopes of repentance. If no repentance is forthcoming, then that person is to be excommunicated in hopes of repentance.

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with (i.e., touch) a woman.” 2 But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. 3 The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. 5 Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to (i.e., have leisure for) prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

What do you think was the “matter” that Paul was answering in these verses? The question must have been something like: “Paul, you’re not married. Is it morally superior for a man to live his whole life without sexual relations with a wife?” There were probably people who were saying that celibacy was morally superior...for both the married and the single. Paul answers that it is morally good, for sure, if one remains single, but since God made us as sexual creatures, it is also very rare to be able to be celibate, and therefore, for such people the moral superiority would be in getting married. Also because of the way God has made us, if you are married, then you must understand that your spouse married you in order to carry out this sexual urge with you. When it comes to sexual relations between husband and wife, each has the authority over the other.
What would be the purpose of abstaining from sexual relations with your spouse? Like fasting, abstinence may be a good practice to do in order to master and fully control the appetites of the flesh as an aid to strengthening one’s spiritual life.

So while these words of Paul do not talk about the situation of a bickering husband and wife or of a spouse who is punishing the other for some sin, can we apply these words to such situations? The main thing that we can apply with these words is that God made us as sexual creatures, so if we are married, we must realize that our spouse has needs and we must fulfill our marital duty to them. Punishing the other by forced abstinence or forced relations is failing to carry out your marital duty. Agreement should be made.

1 Corinthians 7:8-9 –
8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

At what age do you think Paul would say a person should get married? When they “burn.” This is difficult for us nowadays when jobs very often depend on years of schooling when the person is “burning” and when adults see their older children as incapable of choosing a proper spouse or taking on the responsibilities of marriage. When we look at Martin Luther’s quote below, what do you think he would say about us today?

Martin Luther – Whoever finds himself unsuited to the celibate life should see to it right away that he has something to do and to work at; then let him strike out in God’s name and get married. A young man should marry at the age of twenty at the latest, a young woman at fifteen to eighteen; that’s when they are still in good health and best suited for marriage. Let God worry about how they and their children are to be fed.

When we see Luther saying that a person out to “see to it right away that he has something to do and to work at” before getting married, he would probably say immediately when you find a job, get married. For our culture that age would probably be lifted to 23-27 for the man. The culture for the woman was not the same as today. As far as the lesson today is concerned, the point is to be aware of the “burning” idea when it comes to dealing with adversities that the spouse brings into the marriage that drives out peace.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 –
10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not (be) separate(d) from her husband. 11 But if she does (is separated), she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce (send away) his wife.
When did Jesus ever say what Paul says in verses 10-11?  (These were words only for when both spouses were believers.) Jesus taught Paul for 3 years (Gal 1:12,15-18). It could have been during that time. Otherwise, we have Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:32, although He says nothing about the woman’s actions or about separation and reconciliation. Another option is in Matthew 19:8-9, where the Lord gave the option for a civil divorce for His people, but this is not the way it was supposed to be. And if a civil divorce did take place, they were not to marry a different spouse since that was only possible through adultery.

What, then, is Paul saying about divorce as an answer to past sins of the spouse? It shouldn’t occur. But there may be cases where it does occur. If it is done, then marrying a different spouse is not an option unless adultery takes place, for you are still married in the eyes of God.

1 Corinthians 7:15 –
15 But if the unbeliever leaves (separates), let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

What would be examples of this? The unbeliever, by his lifestyle, makes living in peace impossible for the believer. A person who calls himself a believer may also fit under this category of “unbeliever” since he is divorcing himself/herself from Christ by his/her lifestyle in the marriage. Examples of such a lifestyle may be: 1) refusing sexual intimacy; 2) seeking an abortion; 3) refusing to have children; 4) inflicting physical or emotional abuse; 5) refusing to support the family.

Considering the above, what actions could a Christian woman take concerning her Christian husband who is emotionally abusing her? (Try to put it in order.)

1 – Make her husband aware of the emotional abuse that she is feeling from him;
2 – Ask that there be no sexual relations for a time so that you can both pray about it;
3 – Take the problem to a trusted Christian friend who can speak to the husband;
4 – Take the problem to the pastor who can speak to the husband;
5 – Separate from him so that he might understand the wickedness of his sin and repay;
6 – Get the government involved by getting a civil divorce from him so that he might repent;
7 – Treat him like an unbeliever and don’t feel bound to remarry him.

Steps 1-6 all have as their purpose repentance and reconciliation. It isn’t until step 7 that the actual divorce takes place. The church would excommunicate the husband at this time. The church would receive him back if he repented, but the woman does not need to remarry him at that point.

Since I could not find the good, the bad, and the ugly for biblical examples of divorces, I thought I’d get cute with it and call the three examples that I found Wash, Rinse, and Repeat …are you really going to wash that man right out of your hair?
MATTHEW 1:18-21

What was the penalty for an adulteress (Lev 20:10) (John 8:4,5)?
Death to both transgressors.

Joseph was a righteous man, i.e. he was a truly religious Jews who followed the Mosaic Law. Why, then, didn’t he demand that justice be carried out against an adulteress?
Jewish laws were more lax than when God gave them. He could not consummate the marriage with Mary under the present conditions. And because he loved her, he didn’t want to charge Mary with anything, so he took advantage of the lax divorce laws and gave her her walking papers without demanding any recompense or making a big deal out of it.

How did God wash away any thoughts of divorce from the mind of Joseph?
He let Joseph know what had taken place by the Holy Spirit.

Obviously, this is a unique situation. Look at Matthew 5:31-32. What does Jesus say about divorce?
That if a spouse is guilty of adultery, the other spouse may walk away from the marriage and marry someone else. By giving walking papers to a fellow believer who has not committed adultery, you are setting them up to become adulterers since you are still married to them in God’s eyes. Jesus is not taking up divorce from an unbeliever in these words, as that is taken up by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:12ff.

MATTHEW 19:1-12

How did Jesus rinse off some dirt from the disciples’ thinking?
They thought they could get a divorce and walk away from any responsibility toward their wife for any reason since Moses allowed that in his law. But instead, they were committing adultery in such circumstances.

What was the disciples’ solution for divorce?
Don’t get married.

What does this surprising remark from the disciples say about them?
That they either: 1) had gotten divorces; or 2) had difficult times with their spouses.

Did Jesus disagree with them?
No. He said that not getting married is a way to go if you are a eunuch by birth (free from sexual appetite); a eunuch by man (castrated); or if you are one of those whom God has enabled to master your sexual appetite for the sake of the kingdom. But if you cannot be a “eunuch” then it is best to get married and deal with the difficulties that marriage may bring with it. But if you can, then accept what God is giving you the strength to do, and do it.
JOHN 4:13-19

What would make it possible for a woman to have 5 husbands?
Each of them could have died, in which case, she may have married 5 brothers. Or, because of the husbands’ adultery, she could have gotten a divorce and then married another. Or, because each of the 5 husbands took the easy way out of a marriage and wrote her her walking papers according to the law of Moses. Or, because of her own adultery, each of the husbands divorced her, and then she married again. Or it could be a conglomerate of any of the above. Her current state of affairs—“having” a man, leads us to believe that she was an adulterous woman, but this may have been a new situation for her.

What did Jesus say about these repeated attempts?
We notice here that Jesus did not offer her the water of life, but instead wanted to drive her to see her sin (v.15-16). We also notice that her reaction was not of guilt, but of amazement (v.19). From a human perspective, we would keep driving the law at this woman until she expressed sorrow over her sin. Jesus wouldn’t do this. But Jesus could also read the hearts of people, and this may be the case here.

If this woman were guilty of adultery 5 times, and was even now living with one without being married to him, we have a repeat offender. What does the gentleness of Jesus toward this woman reveal?
The sins of adultery and divorce and sexual immorality are forgivable sins.

Wash, rinse, and repeat. May the Lord ever work in our hearts and lives, washing away any thoughts of wrongful divorce, rinsing us from any cultural ideas of easy divorce, and keeping us from being repeat offenders. For once we are married, we don’t want to wash that spouse right out of our hair. We want to love them and enjoy them. This takes us to next week’s class in which we will be taught to rejoice in our spouse.
EXPLORING RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING FOR MARRIAGE THROUGH BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

Session 7 – REJOICING IN YOUR SPOUSE

ECCLESIASTES 9:9

Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun.

Which wife do you think Solomon was referring to? All 1000?? Solomon says, “Enjoy life with your wife!” Easily enough said, but how do we go about doing this? After all, do you remember what the disciples said when Jesus told them they were not allowed to divorce for any reason and remarry another? They said “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” Or what about Solomon’s words of wisdom – “A quarrelsome wife is like the constant dripping of a leaky roof.” Or what about Luther’s words about his wife – ”All my life is patience. I have to have patience with the pope, the heretics, my family, and Katie.” Luther even talked about the difficulty of having joy in marriage. ”The first love is drunken. When the intoxication wears off, then comes the real marriage love.” If marriage is so difficult to maintain, how can we enjoy it?

“Let the wife make her husband glad to come home and let him make her sorry to see him leave.”

"My Katie is in all things so obliging and pleasing to me that I would not exchange my poverty for the riches of Croesus.”

"Oh, Katie do not die and leave me.” Martin could not stand the thought of losing his "rib," as he so often called Katie in joking. The source of joy in a marriage is the love that each shows to the other…not only the romantic and companionship kind of love, but especially the kind of love that the Bible calls for in 1 Corinthians 13.

A study on 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

In this beautiful statement about love, we will see love pictured, not in ideal surroundings of romance and companionship, but in the harsh surroundings of a bad world where distressing influences bring out the positive power and value of love. He does not describe love in its greatest works, sacrifices, and triumphs. Rather, he goes into the ordinary circumstances of everyday life and shows us the picture of love as it must be under these distressing influences.

As we look at God’s 14 descriptions of love, we will read a short explanation of each description and come up with scenarios in which you can see each description of love being carried out in married life. I though I’d divide you all up into two groups today—men and women—to do this.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
v.4 Love is patient (Love suffers long) – Love will find itself amid the sins, evils, and trials of a fallen world, and therefore it must be patient when persons who are ignorant, mean, or malicious do or say things that arouse resentment and anger from us. Love keeps calm and endures no matter how long the offense may persist.

Wives must be patient with their husbands when…

Husbands must be patient with their wives when…

Love is kind (Love avails itself) – Love makes itself available for another. It is always on hand for those in need.

Wives should avail themselves to their husbands when...

Husbands should avail themselves to their wives when…

Love does not envy – Love is satisfied with its own portion and glad of another’s greater portion. It does not detract from the praise that is due another nor try to make them seem less and self seem more by comparison.

Wives should not envy their husband’s…

Husbands should not envy their wife’s...

Love does not boast – Love does not have a selfish need for attention. Love does not call attention to oneself.

Wives should seek less attention for...

Husbands should seek less attention for…

Love is not proud – Love does not have an overestimation of one’s own importance, abilities, or achievements.

Wives should be more humble when it comes to their…

Husbands should be more humble when it comes to their...
v.5 Love does not dishonor others  (Love does not act disrespectfully) – Love is forgetful of self and thoughtful toward others. Love conducts itself in the proper way towards others.

Wives can be more respectful of their husbands by...

Husbands can be more respectful of their wives by...

Love is not self-seeking – Love is unselfish. Love does not seek out the things that satisfy one’s own pleasure, profit, honor, etc., but seeks these things for others.

Wives can be more selfless by...

Husbands can be more selfless by...

Love is not easily angered  (Love is not provoked) – Love is not goaded on by abuse, wrong, insult, or injury.

Wives should hold in their temper better when the husband...

Husbands should hold in their temper better when the wife...

Love keeps no record of wrongs  (Love does not reckon the evil.) – Love forgets to charge any wrong done to itself. Love is neither enraged at the moment, nor does it hold a grudge afterward.

Wives should stop holding grudges because of their husband’s...

Husbands should stop holding grudges because of their wife’s...

v.6 Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth – Love grieves over anything that is considered unrighteous by God. Love rejoices in the truth (the gospel) because it is only by the truth that there can be righteousness.

Wives should grieve more concerning their...

Husbands should grieve more concerning their…
v.7 **Love always protects** (Love puts up with all things) – Love never complains that it is made to endure and to suffer too much; its capacity for suffering is very great.

> Wives should complain less when…
>
> *Husbands should complain less when...*

**Love always trusts** (Love believes all things) – Love refuses to yield to suspicions of doubt. Love puts the best construction on all things.

> Wives should stop doubting their husbands when...
>
> Husbands should stop doubting their wives when…

**Love always hopes** (Love hopes all things) – Love expects only what is best from their fellow man. Love is an optimist because it expects God’s grace to win the heart of the person to do what is good and right.

> Wives should be more optimistic about their husband’s…
>
> *Husbands should be more optimistic about their wife’s...*

**Love always perseveres** (Love endures all things) – Love bears up under trials, pains, and injuries, and does not lose heart.

> Wives shouldn’t lose heart when...
>
> Husbands shouldn’t lose heart when…

As we look at the good, the bad, and the ugly from Biblical examples of enjoying life with your spouse all the days of your life, come up with one of the above descriptions of love that was shown, or not shown.
GOOD – Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:14-20; 4:1) ~ verses 14-19 are background…verses 20 and 1 are the example

Love does not dishonor others … Love keeps no record of wrongs … Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth

BAD – Jacob and Leah (Genesis 29:26-34; 30:16-21)

Love is kind … Love does not boast … Love does not dishonor others … Love is not self-seeking … Love always protects … Love always trusts

UGLY – Solomon and his 700 (1 Kings 11:1-6)

Love is not self-seeking … Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth