

even less love. He stops being careful with his words. So what does she do? You know! The downward spiral. I saw a bumper sticker recently that put it just right. It said, “Stop whining and plot revenge.” What’s missing? Jesus! A marriage will not run smoothly without the love and respect learned from Jesus. “But pastor, if he doesn’t love me, God doesn’t actually expect me to respect him, does he?” “Pastor, if she doesn’t respect me, God doesn’t actually think I can love her, does he?” Yes. Of course he does!

I want to tell you a story from the Bible. God once told his prophet Hosea to get married. Except, he had a strange command about marriage. “Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife” (Hosea 1:2). God told Hosea to marry an adulterous woman named Gomer. You’ve probably never heard this! You’d think the story would have a happy ending, right? It’s in the Bible! Well, Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea. Over and over again. She gave birth to children who weren’t Hosea’s children. Finally, she ran off after other men. Good riddance, right? Except here’s what God commanded Hosea: “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites” (Hosea 3:1). “Hey, Hosea, you know your wife, who was unfaithful to you before your marriage, unfaithful in your marriage, and still unfaithful to you now? Go and love her.” Why? “To show how I love you.” That’s grace. He had Hosea show in his own marriage God’s unconditional love for us. That’s grace!

Because we are that woman: Unfaithful to God from the start. Unfaithful to God in the middle. Unfaithful to God right now. But what does God do? He loves us. That’s grace. Jesus loves you that much! There are days in your marriage when your spouse doesn’t love or respect you like Jesus does. But when you love your spouse without being loved back, then you finally begin to understand God’s love for you in Jesus. It’s grace! Marriage is about learning to love like Jesus.

I learned a great lesson from one of our shut-ins. She wasn’t able to walk, but every time I saw her, she told me how determined she was to walk again. Suddenly, one day I visited her, and she was walking. I couldn’t believe it. “How is this possible?” I asked. She said, “Here’s what the therapist told me, ‘If you want to walk again, what you need to do is walk.’” It’s surprisingly simple. Think about Jesus: How does Jesus win our love? By loving us, always! Wives, do you know the best way to encourage your husband to love you? Respect him. “*In everything.*” Husbands, do you know the best way to encourage your wife to respect you? Love her. Always. This is the way you stop the downward spiral. Learn to love unconditionally like Jesus.

I learned it’s not good enough just to take the oil out. Apparently, you’ve got to put oil back in! Marriage isn’t about what you take out. It’s about what you put in. You have the chance every single day to add Jesus to your marriage. Husbands, each day, as you love your wife unconditionally, you show her how much Jesus loves her. Wives, each day, as you respect your husband, you show him your faith in Jesus. That’s just how God planned from the very beginning! Jesus and us—husbands and wives. Let’s learn to love like Jesus!

**Ephesians 5:21-33**  
**Pastor Nathan Nass**

**Marriage Series #2**  
**February 12, 2017**

**<sup>21</sup>Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup>and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup>In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup>for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup>“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup>This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.**

### **Learning to Love Like Jesus**

I have a confession to make today. I can’t fix anything. I am the least handy person in the world. That’s why I love mowing lawn, because I can do that. I can mow the lawn. I can even change the oil in a lawnmower. I remember one spring in high school, I got our lawn mower all ready to go. I drained the oil. Cleaned out the filter. Washed it off. Put in fresh gas. It looked great! I started it up, made the first couple passes around the yard, and then it suddenly sputtered and died with a loud grinding noise. I didn’t understand. It looked perfect! But I had forgotten to put new oil back in. All the parts were there, except the one thing that makes it run smoothly: Oil.

Marriage is like a lawn mower. Put that on a Valentine card this week! Marriage is like a lawn mower. You can have all the parts there. Everything can look nice and clean on the outside. But if that one thing is missing, there’s going to be friction and tension on the inside. If you’re married, I think you know what I’m talking about. You feel like you’re doing all the right things. Everything should be in place. It should work. But your marriage still isn’t running smoothly. It’s missing that one thing. It’s just hard to know what that one thing is. With the mower, it’s oil. But what about in a marriage? What’s that one thing? Marriage can seem like a mystery.

The scary part is that marriage seems like one mystery God can’t help us solve. It seems like God has got marriage all wrong. You heard what I just read, right? “*The husband is the head of the wife... Wives, submit to your husbands...*” Doesn’t it sound wrong to say that? Old-fashioned. Sexist! If you’re not thinking those things, you know people who are. This roles stuff? Head? Submit? God has it wrong. Society has moved on! If that’s how you

think, I have one question: How's that working out? Why so many marriage problems? Could it be that we refuse to follow God's plan? Maybe you're still skeptical, but I hope you're willing to hear what God has to say.

Because God wants to tell you an amazing love story. There is someone who loves you more than you can possibly imagine. Maybe you don't feel that way today, but it's true. There is someone who considers you so special, that he gave up everything he had so that he could have you. Someone who is committed to you, in sickness and in health, as long as you live. Someone who loves you so unconditionally that he died for you. You know whom I'm talking about? Jesus! Do you know what Jesus calls you? His bride. He died to make you holy. He washed your sins away. Now, when Jesus sees you, he says you look radiant—without a stain or a wrinkle. He's talking about you! You want to talk about love? About commitment? Think of Jesus!

And here's the real mystery—a mystery that we couldn't understand without God telling it to us. The mystery is the wonderful connection between Jesus' love for us and a husband's love for his wife. Listen to what God tells husbands: "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*" Husbands, how much love is that? Love her to death. Not her death—your death! Saying that wouldn't make any sense, unless you see how Jesus loves us to death. Literally. In everything, Jesus put us first. He loves us unconditionally. Unselfishly. For us husbands that's the key to making marriage run smoothly: Learning to love like Jesus.

Husbands, when God calls you the head of your wife, you can't understand that without Jesus. Without Jesus, it would seem like being the "head" gives us the right to rule over our wives. Except, what does it mean for Jesus to be the head of the Church? He loves us. He cherishes us. He sacrifices for us. That's what it means to be the "head." Not ruling your wife with your demands, but giving yourself up for her. That doesn't come naturally to us. It comes from Jesus. Love her not for what you can get out of her, but for what you can give to her. That love isn't a feeling. It's a decision. It's the commitment to live for her, like Jesus did. Love her like Jesus!

Then Jesus turns to wives, and he says, "*Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*" I can see why that's hard to hear. Submit to a man? That doesn't make sense. Unless you know Jesus! Wives and future wives, think about what God has already said. God commands your husband to love you more than himself, to cherish you, protect you, and die for you. Is that bad? On top of that, God assures you that you are God's precious and holy bride whom Jesus bought with his blood. What more do you need? Think about that. Is there any religion that values and cherishes women more than Jesus does?

Now in response to Jesus' love, God asks wives to submit to their husbands. Note that God never tells a man to make his wife submit. There's no forcing. God says, "*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.*" As to the Lord... You don't respect your husband

for who he is. You respect him for who Jesus is. Submitting doesn't mean you're inferior or any less important. Submitting means that you voluntarily yield to someone else in love. Like we submit to Jesus. Is it hard to submit to Jesus? I hope not. Would it be hard to submit to a man who loves you like Jesus loves you? I wouldn't think so. Jesus says to you: Are you strong enough in me, to place yourself under the man I've put in your life? Not out of weakness. Not for his sake. For Jesus.

Husbands, love her like Jesus. Wives, submit to him like to Jesus. That's not old-fashioned. That's God's beautiful plan. It goes back to what marriage is. "*A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*" In a marriage how many people are there? One. "*He who loves his wife loves himself.*" You're one body. So how many heads do you want your body to have? One, right? And what's a head without a body? Nothing. We need each other! Husband and wife: same goal, same importance, different roles. Could God have done it the other way around? He certainly could have! But he didn't. He says, "Trust me!"

The God who made us men and women knows us better than we know ourselves. He doesn't treat men and women the same, because he purposefully made us different. Husbands, what your wife needs more than anything else is your love. She needs to know that you cherish her and that her heart is safe with you. Wives, what your husband needs most is your respect. He needs to know that at least in your eyes, he is someone. Love and respect. Like Jesus and us. That's the oil that keeps marriages running smoothly. Love and respect... Learning to love like Jesus.

So why is that so hard? When my lawn mower broke down and died, could I blame Briggs and Stratton for the engine they designed? Of course not! It was 100% user error. But how often don't we try to blame God's perfect plan for our faulty execution of it? Husbands, the world gives us a distorted view of leadership. From our bosses to our favorite athletes to our president, we are taught that leaders get to put themselves first. We're taught that a real man doesn't care. A real man doesn't show emotion. A real man doesn't let anybody else in. So instead of protecting our wife's heart, we hold her captive. How many wives are just dying to see our love?

And wives, I know it's hard to respect a man who doesn't show his love to you. But if you're only going to respect him when he's respectable, do you want him to love you only when you're lovable? Wives, I don't think you realize the influence you have with your husband. He may be bigger than you and like to make you think that he's tough, but harsh words from a wife hurt a man more than anything else. You, his wife, by God's design have the ability to support him or destroy him. Disrespect at home clouds every other success in a man's life. How do you expect your husband to lead if you refuse to follow?

So what happens in our marriages? Who knows how it starts, but we'll blame the husband. The wife notices that he isn't showing much love. So what does she do? She stops respecting him. She nags him. She complains about him. So what does he do? He shows