

The Dignified Wife  
*A Real Look at Real Marriage*  
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**Bible Verse:** Ephesians 5:22-24  
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The title of today's message is, "The Dignified Wife." The Dignified Wife, taken from Ephesians 5:22 to 24. And let me just say a word about that title in the event that you have not heard the prior two messages which we preached in order to set the stage for that. As I've said, and it almost seems like a gratuitous statement to make, wives come from the realm of women. Wives come from the realm of women and the nature of a wife is determined in large part about what you think about the nature of a woman, and what we have shown over the past couple of messages is that the Bible assigns a very noble and a very dignified position to women. As we saw, the women are created equally in the image of God, just like a man is. In the realm of salvation, women share equally in all of the benefits of salvation; there is no distinction between the blessings of being in Christ that belong to a man, all belong equally to a woman. Women are precious in the sight and in the order of God, and he has assigned a unique dignity to them. One of the ways that we measured that was to see how Jesus Christ treated women during his earthly ministry. And what did we find? We found that he taught them, he healed them of physical affliction, he forgave their sins. In a culture that was not at all treating women as equals with men, Christ poured out his life, poured out his teaching, poured out his grace on women that came around him. And so, through the eyes of Christ, we see the high value of women and then last time, we saw how women responded to Christ, that in the birth of Christ in Mary and the prophetess Anna, there were believing women that surrounded his birth. During the earthly ministry of Christ, women supported him, women followed him, women learned from him. And in the events that are central to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of our Lord, women are found faithfully manning the station, if I can put it that way, faithfully manning the station with Christ at the cross, at the tomb when Christ was buried, and it was a woman to whom the resurrection was first made known.

And so all of these things make us see women with the highest degree of dignity, and here's why that is so important, beloved. We should never anymore, having heard the things that we've heard over the past two weeks, men and women alike should never look at women the same again. We should never look at a woman, let alone our wives, in any way that somehow separates them from the Lord Jesus Christ who made them and assigned them to such a high place of dignity. That means that young men cannot engage their fantasies any longer because you cannot put Christ alongside those images over the

internet and maintain any kind, any semblance of credibility or of righteousness. It means that as husbands or prospective husbands, when we look at our future wives or look at the wife that the Lord has given us, we should never look at them apart from the great dignity that Christ has given to them. And as ladies, as we're going to see in our text today, so very clearly actually, you should never think about your role in marriage apart from the dignified position that Christ has given to you. Everything that we think about women, about marriage, and about the role of wife is wrapped around the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the exercise of his will and the revelation of his will that we find in Scripture. That means that we reject, we consciously reject the mindset of the world. We reject the ideas of feminism, that women should be just like men and should pursue everything that men pursue. We reject that as being the goal and aspiration of women. The goal and aspiration of women is not what the world sets for us, not the vanity that it sets us toward and points us toward, the highest expression of dignity that a woman could ever express would be to be as conformed to the image and the will of her Lord and Savior as possible, as much as the Spirit helps in that direction. That's where dignity is found. Dignity is found in close identity with the Lord Jesus Christ and it is derived directly from him. It is not derivative of your husband. If your husband treats you poorly, it is not a bad reflection on your dignity because your identity and your dignity and your worth come from Christ himself who made you in the image of God, who had a formative hand in your mother's womb, who made you a woman from the beginning, and who now is working in your life to complete the work in order to bring you to his eternal glory.

And so we look at women through the lens of Christ and through the lens of Scripture, as we do today. The image of God and the life of Christ reveal a woman's dignity, and one last thing by way of review before we get into the message for today and we deal with the question of what does godliness in a woman look like? Well, it's really no different from godliness in a man, maybe the application is a bit different. But godliness is found in the manifestation of the character traits expressed in the Beatitudes in Matthew chapter 5. Godliness is found in the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. As we saw last time as we looked at the women at the birth of Christ and the life of Christ and in the events of the gospel, we saw three things that I just want to remind you of. We saw these women all exercising humble faith in the promise of God. We saw them all with a teachable spirit under the word of God. We saw them giving careful attention to the events of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what makes, that's the mark of a godly woman, and we distinguished it, we distinguished it from those who would simply make a horizontal connection between godliness and the care that they give to their families. Well, there are a lot of dear mothers who care for their families but aren't godly, don't even profess to be Christians, and so it can't simply be that we find the dignity of a woman in what she does with respect to her husband or especially to her children. There is more to it. There is this inner spiritual life that marks true godliness and to focus on the externals of family and household things to the exclusion of humble faith, of a teachable spirit, of careful attention to the gospel, is to miss the whole point. It's to hold to the shell without the reality that the shell is supposed to contain.

And so it's with that spirit that we come to Ephesians 5, verses 22 through 24 for our text this morning. Look at it there with me as we read. Actually, we're going to start in verse 21 because it is a crucial part of the overall context. Paul tells the church as a whole to be, "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.. And then he goes directly to the wives,

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Beloved, what you need to see as we look at this passage in its overall context, in the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul had been praising God for the glories of salvation. He elected us in Christ. He redeemed us in Christ. He sealed us with the Spirit. And he shows us that that was a deliverance from the being dead in sin, dominated by the devil, and doomed to suffer the wrath of God. God graciously, ladies, those of you that are in Christ, God graciously delivered you from that spiritual bondage and into a life that he has planned out for you. And so what we see in Ephesians 4 through 6 is the life that we are to live as Christians in response to the gracious work of salvation that God has given to us. And so there is a context to all of this. There is the dignity of the woman. There is the context of Ephesians 5. There's the context of salvation. Note, please, that we did not just simply go right to Ephesians 5 and start saying women have to submit to their husbands. We set a context for this to be received. And in the more near context, notice in chapter 5, verse 18, that Paul says, "don't get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The instruction on marriage flows out of that teaching about the Spirit-filled life. You cannot separate the principle of a wife's submission to her husband from the principle of being filled with the Spirit. You cannot separate the principle of a wife submitting to her husband from the whole context of Christian salvation. You cannot separate it from the examples that we see of godly women in Scripture. You cannot separate it from the Lord Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection on our behalf.

Notice, as we're just kind of getting acquainted with the passage here, notice that in five or six different ways in these three verses, Christ, through his word, through the apostolic word, wraps the duty of the wife like strands of DNA woven together around himself. Verse 22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. The husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church." His body, the Savior, as the church submits to Christ over and over again, this is premised on who Christ is and what Christ has done. Ladies, you just simply cannot reject the principle of submission in marriage and maintain anything that is consistent about Christian salvation. And so we need to see that. We don't look at women apart from Christ. We don't look at the role of the wife apart from Christ. He is central to it all.

One other thing that I want to show you from the context, the following context, is that God has established the principle of submission in the overall moral order that structures biblical worldviews in the way that we approach everything. In the family, wives submit to their husbands. "Children," chapter 6, verse 1, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Chapter 6, verse 5, "Slaves obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling. Masters," verse 9, "do the same to them." You can go to Romans 13 and see the principle of submission woven into government and the way that believers respond to the governing authorities. You can go to the institution of the church in Hebrews 13 and see that the principle of submission is woven into the order of the local church as it responds to the elders that God has appointed. And so the thing that I want you to see is one, is that if this comes from Christ, it must be for our good, it must be for our blessing. We see that this is not taken out of context, but is woven into a comprehensive view of Christian salvation and we see that the principle of order and submission, God has established that and commanded that throughout multiple areas that govern all of our lives and so it's only in response to the influence of the world that the church would ever balk against what God has said in his word here.

And so with that background, beloved, when we talk about submission, the submission has the idea of subordination. You arrange your life, your attitudes, your responses under the authority of the one that God has put into that position. For example, soldiers submit to, they are subordinate to those who have a superior rank in their chain of command. And so it's that idea broadly in all of the context that helps us approach this question that frames the remaining time that we have together. How does a woman who has such great dignity assigned to her from God, how does she live within her marriage that God has given to her? Beloved, this is so vital. What I'm about to say is kind of the thread that joins all of the following four points together. The way that she responds to her husband is consistent with the prior – watch this – the prior vertical submission that she has established before Christ. You come to Christ in salvation with a humble faith that says, "O Lord, I submit to you without reservation and your word I take as my authority." And we come to the word and we see this as being part of it. And in that submission to Christ, what the Spirit of God produces in the woman who is truly saved and who is filled with the Spirit, which is to be filled with the word of God, this spirit of humble faith, of a teachable spirit, of careful attention to the truth of God, that marks the life in general, in total, and then it spills over and is expressed in this specific way within marriage.

Now let me just pause here. Over the years, I've been blessed to have a godly wife, to have godly daughters. I'm grateful for them. I've been grateful, and we are very blessed in this body of believers to have godly women who manifest these characteristics. And so for many here in the audience, I'm simply reinforcing the direction your life is already going, and that's a privilege for me of which I am not worthy. Over the years also in ministry, there have been women who are not of this spirit, and let me just say this in the most constructive, positive way that I can, looking forward for your benefit: if you tend to be a woman with strong opinions, if you tend to be a woman who is openly verbal in expressing what you think and having ideas about what others should do with what God has given to them, you need to approach this with humble faith, with a teachable spirit, and with careful attention to the gospel of Christ, because sometimes women want to

maintain that combative, confrontational attitude while simultaneously maintaining their testimony as Christians. That's like oil and water. That does not mix. Those two things do not go together. It's okay to be a verbal and expressive woman, but you just need to have your heart governed by principles like this that we see here in order to be what God has called you to be. A combative, rebellious woman, though she may name Christ with her lips, is not being consistent with what Scripture reveals about the dignity of women and the godliness that God requires in general and in particular with regard to their husbands.

So with all of that said, let's look at four principles quickly from this text that I believe will be helpful, will be liberating, will be challenging, hopefully for many of you will be very affirming to you. For you young men, not yet married but longing to be, these are the kinds of traits that you look for in a woman. For those of you ladies that are single and are not yet married as you would like to be, these are the things that you set your heart to aspire after. Some of it just simply comes with submitting to God and trusting God while you wait on him for what you desire your life to be. He will be faithful to you, but while you wait, you don't wait to develop these characteristics until you get what you want, you develop them now while you're waiting, and then God blesses that as it carries over into marriage. I'm on your side here today, every one of you, man, woman, boy, and girl alike, I'm on your side, and so it's with that spirit and that context that we turn to the work of the word now.

Point number one, what is the mark of the dignified wife? What does God call a wife to? He calls her to, number one, submission to her husband. Submission to her husband, to adopt a posture and a mindset of subordination to the husband that God has given to her. Paul addresses wives as he opens this broad theme of submission. He starts with wives, not with the husbands in this matter and he says, "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord." That's the opening matter and, beloved, there's a couple of immediate things that we need to see. Paul specifies who it is that he's talking to in these three verses. He is talking to wives. He is not telling the husbands what they are free to demand from their wife without regard to their own godliness. In some ways, men, you are to look at this and say, "He's speaking to wives, not to me. I need to be careful about reading someone else's mail." He's not instructing husbands in what they get to demand in their selfish carnality and to rule with a fist saying, "Woman, you submit to me." He's not talking to you. He's talking to the wives. He'll get to you in verse 25. He's talking to the wives and telling the ladies how they need to think and operate within themselves.

Notice something else really important, and it's remarkable how often clear Christian teaching is twisted into things that it was never intended to mean. Paul addresses wives, and he tells them to yield to their husbands. He is not telling them to submit to all men generally, absent some other authority relationship. He is not calling a girlfriend to submit to her boyfriend. That is a complete gross caricature. It is a mischaracterization of it all and I want to emphasize that simply because I've seen young men coming under influences of others whose teaching I do not support, thinking that they need to dominate their girlfriends, and the girlfriend needs to follow them and submit to them, and that's not what Paul is saying here. This is a principle that is engaged and activated at the time of marriage, but until then the young lady is not in any biblical position of having to

submit to her boyfriend. It's important for us to recognize that Paul is establishing limits on the realm of submission. It's not universal, all women to all men. It's not girlfriend to boyfriend. This sphere of submission of which he speaks is the unique, exclusive realm of marriage between one biological man and one biological woman. That's the sphere. And so what Christian wives are to do is to recognize the authority that God has given to their husband and respond to it.

Ladies, I realize that this passage and this series kind of, for some of you, you know, we're parachuting into the middle of your life after there's been a lot of, I'm thinking of a battlefield mindset, you know, there's been a lot of combat that's gone before, and here we are paratroopers parachuting into the middle of your situation, and I just want to say this to you: for better or for worse, this is the man, this husband that you have, whether he's sitting by you in the room or whether he does not join you in your desire to worship God, this is the man that God has given to you. This is the one that you are to respond to. And in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul addresses Christian wives, says, "If you have an unbelieving husband and he wants to live with you, you live with him. Live with him within the bounds of marriage." And so rather than rebel against that and to resent the circumstances, say, "This is the man that God has given me." Maybe you made some bad choices earlier on, and now you're dealing with the consequences of that. Know that there's a special grace that operates in the realm that you find yourself in. But this is God's plan. This is God's will for your life. You don't need to go looking for the will of God in mystical experiences, waiting to hear a voice from God or to read some forsaken book like "Jesus Calling" and to hear the word of God in your life. God has revealed his will to you as a married woman, and it's found here in Ephesians 5.

And so a dignified wife, a Christian wife, embraces submission to her husband as part of the expressed will of God to her, the commanded will of God to her. And so married ladies, whatever submission means, whatever it looks like, and we're going to see more in a moment, this is what God calls you to implement, to embrace in your life. And let me just say this, when you pastor a congregation of our size, there's a lot of different people that you carry in your heart as you walk up these four steps and step into the pulpit; you're carrying people with you in your heart as you do that. I'm often mindful of the single ladies in our congregation, and I know that it's difficult for you often. Let me just say this, is that in light of this principle of submission, I encourage you, I beg you, I admonish you, I plead with you to be wise and to don't be in a hurry to get married to a man just because you're lonely and you think marriage will make loneliness go away. The truth of the matter, my dear lady friends, is that marriage can make you much more lonely if you are under the principle of submission to a man who does not love you back. And so just be careful, as a friend of mine used to say, it's better to want something you don't have than to have something you don't want. And so trust the Lord for his wisdom and his providence as you go through these things. When marriage, when you make those vows and you become one, this principle becomes operative and you are responsible to follow that man. Once you marry, you are accountable to this principle of submission to your husband and so wisdom just dictates that you be careful as you pursue the thought of marriage.

Now secondly, we've seen submission to the husband, understand that in a greater sense, this is submission to the Lord. This is submission to the Lord. The biblical duty of a wife's submission to her husband originates with Christ himself. It is part of the revealed word and will of God. It is separate and independent of whether the man is worthy of that or not, we'll talk about that in a moment. This is what God says. This is a vertical responsibility given from God to you coming down, as it were, from heaven to you as a revelation of his will, and it's what God wants from you. You can almost factor your husband out of it and say, "Lord, what would you have me to do," and find here that God, Christ himself, is calling you to this submission.

Let's look at it here as we go through the verses again. "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord." There is a parallel. You submit to Christ. We follow and obey Christ. We call him Lord. We do what he says, and what Paul says is your submission, your relationship to your Lord is like that. It's in that realm. Verse 23, "the husband is the head of the wife even as," notice the parallel, "Christ is the head of the church." Verse 24, "as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." God is the one who established the husband's authority in the home. It's keeping with the very principle of creation, even. He created Adam, and then he took a rib from Adam and created the woman to be a helpmate to him. Adam had the position of headship, and the woman God brought alongside to be alongside to help him. And so this is the order, this is the plan, this is the structure of God and so, beloved, God assigns this. God commands this submission to the Christian wife, who, let me remind you, is a woman of high dignity, who is a woman of humble faith, is a woman of teachable spirit, is a woman who is committed to the gospel. In the whole context of this, God says, "As part of what I created you to do, this is what it looks like in marriage."

And so, there is no way to evade the fact that ultimately obedience to this principle is first and foremost a matter of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Christ says, "I will have you submit to your husband," and the question that every woman needs to answer for herself is, what will you do in response to what Christ has commanded you to do? That's the question. And I realize, at the risk of repeating myself, at least I won't be quoting myself in this message, I don't think, I realize how hard this is, or can be. It doesn't have to be difficult. But what makes it difficult is that perhaps your own mother lived differently. Certainly, society has conditioned you to think in a completely different manner about yourself and how you respond to those around you. We are conditioned, ladies are given great promises of how happy and joyful they'll be if they simply rebel against authority and if they assert themselves, and then when you have the media industry portraying all men as knuckleheads and fools wearing dunce caps, just drinking beer and watching football and doing silly things, it's very easy to imbibe that and say, "Well, I'm not going to submit in light of that. I'm going to assert myself. I'm going to find my true person." Well, dear sisters, Christ in his word, Christ in calling you to himself has done something of profound consequence. Christ laid his hand upon you in sovereign grace by his sovereign will and drew you to himself so that you would be an obedient disciple of his. That is the highest place of dignity. But now you respond to the way that Christ thinks, what Christ's word is, and you are no longer your own. You have been bought with a price, it says in 1 Corinthians 6. And so you are no longer your own

to assert yourself. Now you respond to the Master who has graciously brought you in and made you one of his own and as a result of that, your responsibility, your privilege as a woman in Christ is this, is to have your thinking transformed by the word of God under the power and the illumination of the Spirit of God so that your thinking is transformed and your affections are transformed to think like Christ thinks, to love the things that Christ loves, and you can't be that, you can't pursue that and simultaneously hold on to the spirit of the world. It doesn't work that way.

And so it becomes your privilege and your opportunity to step back at a time like this and a series like this and make a conscious decision. "I want to embrace my Lord. I want to embrace what he has revealed. I want to be like him. I want to be like those ladies that were around him in his earthly ministry, following him, loving him, confessing my sin to him, receiving his forgiveness, receiving his love, receiving his kindness. I want to be in the realm of Christ, not in the realm of the world." 1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world or the things of the world." Well, that starts at the deepest, most profound level of your affections and what it is that you even want out of life. Ladies, what do you want out of life? Do you want yourself? Do you want the vanity of this world? The passing nature of the fickle approval of a world that markets this to you with extreme power? Or do you want to step out of that, step toward Christ, and in the spirit of Isaiah say, "Speak, Lord, your servant listens." It's actually Samuel, "Speak, Lord, your servant listens. I love you for saving me, for dying on the cross, for redeeming me out of my prior way of life, for rescuing me from hell and sin. I love you for that, Lord," you say in your heart. "You say that this is what you want from me, teach me how to do that. Enable me, give me grace to become what you want me to be."

You see, beloved, all of that to say that the dignified wife, the Christian wife, embraces submission in obedience to Christ himself before, in a sense, before the husband himself ever enters into the picture. And so, submission, let's put it this way, as we wrap up this second point, submission is to the husband, submission is to the Lord. Those two points go together, really. Ladies, submission to your husband is so tied up, it is so wound together with obedience to Christ that you really cannot separate the two. If Christ says, "Follow your husband," and you say, "I won't follow that man," then it's a reaction against Christ because Scripture puts them together. And so godliness, you dignified women, godliness starts with your response to Christ, with that teachable spirit, with that humble faith, with that love for the gospel, and then that greater context, that greater environment that God cultivates by his Spirit in your heart spills over into your relationship with your husband. Your relationship with your husband is simply one application of the broader work of grace that God is doing to conform you to the image of Christ. You must see it that way. You cannot separate the two. Humble faith, teachable spirit, attention to the gospel.

Now thirdly, said it's a submission to your husband, it's a submission to the Lord. Thirdly, it's a submission that is based on authority, on the right to rule and lead. And there's simply no avoiding the fact, even if it would gain us temporary applause from the world, there is no avoiding the fact, and we don't want to avoid the fact, that God has given to men the position of leadership in the home. Look at verse 23, "For the husband is the

head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior." Paul points to the position of Christ over the church. Is there any question in anyone's mind who thinks at all biblically that Christ rules over his church, that Christ has authority and prerogative over the church which he purchased with his own precious blood? There should be no question or doubt or rebellion against that. It's that principle, that broader principle of Christ over the church that Paul appeals to as the pattern to establish the role of the husband in the Christian home. And so, the head refers to the place of authority. We talk about the head of a corporation, the head of a department or something like that, and we recognize that this is the person who has the final decision-making capacity, and what Paul is saying here is that he wants wives to line up under the authority that God instituted. Your submission is in keeping with that God-given dignity. It is not a matter of inferiority. It is a matter of a God-assigned role. And when Christ sovereignly saved you and drew you to himself, he asserted his authority over your soul. He set you apart. He sanctified you so that you would belong to him and be an instrument of the execution of his will, of obedience to him, and this is part of it. The husband has authority, the wife loves and honors him as she honors and loves Christ himself.

Now, fourth point here is that submission is comprehensive. Submission is comprehensive and here in this final point, I'm going to address just briefly some of the difficult issues and questions that people naturally ask. But before we ask, here's an important point, beloved. This is an important point. Before we ask the difficult questions, well, what if the husband's abusive? Or does that mean that the wife has no say in anything? Before we ask difficult questions like that, we have to establish the guiding general comprehensive principle and then deal with the difficult questions later. You don't start with the difficult questions and then force Scripture to say something that it doesn't really say. You let Scripture speak. and then you work out the application in light of the guiding general principles. And so point number four here, submission is comprehensive, remembering I'm going to address just ever so briefly some of the difficulties that come along.

Look at verse 24 with me, "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." Wives should submit in everything to their husbands. It's not limited to when you think your husband is right. We submit to Christ because of his authority. The wife submits because of the authority that Christ has given to the husbands. Now, there's a very endearing and sweet little story that I want to tell you from a prior episode in ministry. There was a dear, godly young man and a dear, godly young woman who had been together for a while, and I had the inestimable privilege as a pastor of talking to them together and individually as their relationship progressed. So it's kind of like one of those movies where you know what's happening, but the characters in the movie don't necessarily know what's happening, whatever that literary principle is called. And so the man was moving at his own pace, which was not the preferred pace of the young woman. She wanted to hurry this thing up. She was ready to be married to this fine, young, godly man, and she poured her heart out to me. And I just asked her, I said, "You want to follow this man, right?" She said, "Yeah, I really do. I love him. I respect him." It was all very sweet. And I said, "But you want to follow him on your timetable, is that it?" Ah, then the lights went on. To follow the guy and follow

him meant that you followed his timing, you didn't dictate the timing to him. Well, in like manner, ladies, this is where it comes, where the rubber meets the road, and they ended up together. They're happy. I'm happy about their relationship. It's all very, very good. But there was just that moment where the principle of submission came clearer to her, where she said, "Ah, if I'm going to follow him and pattern my life in submission to him, then I wait on him to make the decision in his time rather than insisting that it be on my time." And there you go.

This duty, ladies, of which we speak, Scripture makes it very plain, this duty applies even when your husband is unworthy of it. Look over at 1 Peter for just a moment. 1 Peter 3, verses 1 and 2. What do you do when your husband is unworthy of it, when he's not worthy being followed in your judgment? Well, Scripture addresses that specifically. "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct." Scripture says, yes, it's as if God says, "Yes, I understand that your husband may be disobedient." He may very well not be the loving, sacrificial man that we read about later in Hebrews 5. Your response is not to scold him, not to nag him, not to beat him to death with it, but to go back to your Lord and say, "Lord, help me manifest this submission to you." And Christ says that as you do that, the path forward is by keeping your lip zipped, so to speak, by holding the tongue that so much wants to say something and vindicate and set things right, and by your respectful, pure, loving, gracious conduct over time to win your husband if the Lord would give you that grace. It goes back to a principle we've said many, many times. When your husband is unworthy of your submission, you play the long game. You obey Christ and follow in submission rather than rebelling and objecting to it.

Along with that, ladies, the dignified wife, the Christian wife, she considers how it is that she uses her tongue. How she uses her tongue. Look over at Proverbs 19 with me for a moment. Proverbs chapter 19, verses 13 and 14. I can only point you to this. "A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain." The drip, drip, drip of a leaky faucet, drip, drip, drip of a leaky roof, nothing's going to fix that, and it's not one drip that's the problem, it's the continual cumulative weight of it all that this incessantly never stops. A wife like that, a wife who quarrels with her husband, is like that annoyance that we all can understand and relate to. Scripture says, don't be like that. To the contrary, verse 14, "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD."

And so, submission to the husband, submission to the Lord, submission that is based on authority, submission that is comprehensive, that's what Scripture calls the dignified woman. to do and to be. Now the principle is clear, the applications are many, and I'm not going to expand on these at all, I'm just going to make these statements. If you find yourself in a difficult position in your marriage and you don't know what to do, you can come to the elders, we'll find someone to help you, talk to, help you work through these things. Let me just say a couple of things to clarify this. Wives certainly are free to speak. They are free to express their opinions. They are free to make appeals. "Sweetheart, have you considered this? I know this is your decision, but have you considered this?" And

men, your wife is entitled to ask questions like that and get reasonable, loving, patient interaction from you. Maybe your wife knows better than you do. The fact that the wife is in a duty of submission does not mean that she is necessarily less intelligent than her husband. It's often just the reverse. And the smart, intelligent, godly man will listen to his wife, and the husband who does not listen to his wife and does not care for what she says, we'll address that in the week to come.

Wives have skills that should be used in marriage. It was a great blessing from God to me. You know, I don't know which end of the hammer to use. It was a great blessing from God to me to give me a wife who knows how to do all of that stuff. I'm still retaining my man card, even as she fixes the plumbing and does the other things that Nancy does. Wives have skills that should be used in marriage, and only a fool would keep her from doing so. Wives can appeal to elders when things are intolerable in the home, and are entitled to a sympathetic hearing when they do. And one other thing, the principle of submission does not mean that wives have to tolerate physical abuse. If there were ever an instance, and I just want you men to hear this loud and clear, if it ever occurred within Truth Community Church that a man was physically abusive to his wife, I want you to know, I'm telling you in advance, what our counsel to that woman will be. You call the authorities and we will support you. The fact that she is in submission does not mean that the husband is entitled to rain his fists down upon her and she suffers in silence. The authorities are established to restrain that kind of evil within society, and if it comes to that, a wife is entitled to appeal to a separate authority to address the abuse of authority that her husband is exercising upon her.

Those little examples, four of them there at the end, simply to give you a sense that the principles are clear, the way it works out in difficult situations is something that the church, that the elders, that Scripture show us the way. Your husband can be a dunce, and Scripture says you win him without a word, but there are lines that the husband cannot cross and in light of what follows in Ephesians 5, it will be obvious that the dignified man, the dignified husband, the godly Christian in his marriage would never think of going that way anyway and that's what we'll have the privilege of seeing beginning next Sunday.

Let's pray together as we go to the Lord.

*Dear Father, every person, every man and woman is different, and certainly every marriage has its strengths and weaknesses and, Father, there's unique opportunities, challenges, and encouragements within each of these sacred bonds. I pray for our dear ladies before me, Father. I pray that you would strengthen them to be women of Christ, and then everything else will flow as a result of that. And for us men, Father, often so unworthy of the submission that you call our wives to give to us, Father, may we be receptive and teachable in the Scriptures that are about to come as we continue to consider this institution of marriage. And when marriage gets difficult, Father, help us all to line ourselves up, to draw near to Christ, and as we do, the Spirit will work and shape us into the people that you would have us to be. Help us to that end, and, Father, for those that are here not knowing Christ at all, may you, by your Spirit, Father, help*

*them to know that a blood atonement was made for sinners just like them, and peace with God is found in Christ alone. May they turn to that one true Mediator by faith alone and enter safely into your heavenly kingdom. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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