



WITH ALL
Honor

CULTIVATING THE CHARACTER
OF A GODLY GENTLEMAN

MAN OF THE WORD MANUAL • FALL 2018

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OF A GODLY GENTLEMAN

Mount Calvary Baptist Church
Man of the Word
Fall 2018

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WITH ALL HONOR

THEME

“At the heart of mature masculinity is a sense of benevolent responsibility to lead, provide for and protect women in ways appropriate to a man’s differing relationships.”¹ This really is the idea at the heart of this cycle’s MOW theme. God created humankind in His image, male and female. As Christian men, God’s Word calls us to embrace a biblical masculinity that truly honors, respects, and cares for women, in all of our different relationships.

THEME PASSAGE

Praise ye the Lord.

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,

That delighteth greatly in his commandments.

His seed shall be mighty upon earth:

The generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Wealth and riches shall be in his house:

And his righteousness endureth for ever.

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness:

He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth:

He will guide his affairs with discretion.

Surely he shall not be moved for ever:

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

His heart is established, he shall not be afraid,

Until he see his desire upon his enemies.

He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor;

His righteousness endureth for ever;

His horn shall be exalted with honour.

The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;

He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away:

The desire of the wicked shall perish.

Psalm 112 (KJV)

¹ John Piper, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 29.

TIME

9 weeks: August 1 – November 3

GOALS

1. Develop a mutually edifying relationship with my prayer partner through prayer and encouragement.
2. Intentionally cultivate the character and practices of a godly gentleman in my interactions with women.
3. Equip myself with scriptural truth and practices to lead others in this area—especially in my own family.

MY PRAYER PARTNER (NAME, PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL):

MAN OF THE WORD PROGRAM

The leadership of Mount Calvary Baptist Church created the Man of the Word program in obedience to the command of 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." This ministry functions under the leadership of Pastor Mark Minnick, Pastor Jerid Jones, and Chris Baker, elder. The following men are the current Man of the Word officers.

President Malcom Evans
Vice President Jerry Broere
Treasurer Ken Brackbill
Food Director David Baker
Project Coordinator Jesse Keck
Manual Director Timothy Hughes

We are grateful to Pastor Mark Minnick for his encouragement and leadership and for his vision for the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. We would also like to express our gratitude to the men who have donated their time, energy, and gifts by writing spiritually edifying articles for our growth and encouragement.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is a nine-week study designed both to kindle in our hearts a desire to cultivate the character of a godly gentleman and to give us tools and ideas to better reflect this essential aspect of biblical masculinity. Each week's resources consists of:

- SCRIPTURE READING – A passage pertaining to the week's article to be read and considered throughout the week
- TRUTH FOR MEDITATION – A verse or passage of Scripture that deals with the theme
- PERSONAL REFLECTIONS – A week-by-week place to record what God is teaching you
- M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE – A way to keep on track in reading through the Bible in 2015 using the M'Cheyne system
- ARTICLES – Testimonies and devotionals on the theme, by Mt. Calvary Baptist Church men

Don't let these materials become daunting. Let whatever you do be a delight. If you can't keep up every component, choose the ones that you can use consistently and stick with them.

Let's ask for God's richest blessings on us in this cycle of our MOW program—and let's ask Him to allow this to be a life-changing study for each one of us.

Timothy Hughes, August 2018

NOT JUST ANOTHER BIG, STRONG GUY

MARK MINNICK

I grew up in a home of four brothers and no sisters. Our mother was the only non-male in the house. That meant that she had five guys to take care of, *all by herself*. I wasn't aware of it then, but as an adult I came to realize how much that unequal family configuration had subtly given me a slightly defective view of women.

Several years ago after a big Thanksgiving dinner, I was reminiscing out loud about mother's seemingly tireless energy during holidays. Up early before everyone else to cook and arrange, she served dad and us boys until we'd all eaten ourselves into oblivion, and then, while we wandered off to nap or watch a ball game, she got up to clear the table, wash the dishes, and straighten the kitchen. I can recall watching her and thinking, "Women must be different than men; they don't get as tired and worn out as we do." When I shared that memory, my brother, Tracy, exclaimed, "I remember thinking the same thing!"

I remember ruefully the first time that it ever really clicked with me that I was subconsciously expecting more out of my wife than was reasonable. We were attempting to carry a heavy couch through the front door. We had to twist it at an odd angle to maneuver it through, and Linda suddenly dropped her end with a crash. My arms felt pulled out of their sockets, and I exclaimed something (I don't remember what) impatient and upset. Linda just looked at me unapologetically and said simply, "I just couldn't hold on any longer!"

That's when it hit me, probably for the first time, that I was sometimes treating my wife as if she were just another guy. Or worse, thinking that she, like my mother, was a super-guy. Of course she should be able to hold up her end of the couch! Or do any number of other things that I, as a man, could do with little sleep and running flat out on an occasional burger or bag of chips.

But actually, the Bible says the exact opposite. Women are weaker than men (I Pet. 3:7). There are individual exceptions, of course, but they prove the rule.

That comparative weakness (whether it be physical, emotional, or just generally constitutional) is part of what makes and keeps the other half of the human race feminine. And soft, tender femininity is what draws

out of men a whole host of gentlemanly virtues, virtues which are actually components of strong, virile, attractive Christlikeness.

It's Christlike for men to treat girls and women of all ages with distinctive courtesies that acknowledge their femininity. Those distinctive courtesies are taught in Scripture. This cycle of MOW is designed to call our attention to them and to encourage us to develop the sensitivities to women that ennoble and honor them as God intends.

WEEK 1

September 2-September 7

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 1-3

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:27

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 2	1 Sam 26	1 Cor 7	Eze 5	Ps 42, 43
Sep 3	1 Sam 27	1 Cor 8	Eze 6	Ps 44
Sep 4	1 Sam 28	1 Cor 9	Eze 7	Ps 45
Sep 5	1 Sam 29, 30	1 Cor 10	Eze 8	Ps 46, 47
Sep 6	1 Sam 31	1 Cor 11	Eze 9	Ps 48
Sep 7	2 Sam 1	1 Cor 12	Eze 10	Ps 49

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

GENTLEMEN IN GOD'S IMAGE

ERIC NEWTON

Scripture's own storyline reveals the significance of our calling to be gentlemen recreated in God's image.

In the beginning God created all things for His own glory, culminating in the creative act Moses later recorded with these words: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). God positioned His image-bearers to spread His blessing and steward His dominion as male and female. At the end of His work week God observed that His entire creation "was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Gender distinctiveness is not only necessary for multiplication but perfect in design.

Male and female humanity, however, went very wrong. At some point after creation the serpent shrewdly tempted Eve, who succumbed and shared the forbidden fruit with Adam. God found the first human pair attempting to hide and cover their guilt with fig leaves. When confronted by God, Eve blamed the serpent, and, even worse, Adam blamed Eve. The strife had begun.

God rendered a manifold judgment with massive implications for men and women in a fallen world. Eve would experience pain in childbirth. She would resist the leadership role God had given her husband. And though Adam's part of the curse concerned the ground, not his wife, God held the first head of household ultimately responsible. As Paul explains in Romans 5, in *Adam* we all sinned. Because of Eve each child comes into the world through its mother's pain. Because of Adam that child is born in sin.

Ever since that fateful day men have characteristically struggled to relate honorably to their female counterparts. As unfolded in Scripture's own narrative, this struggle is one of the primary ways men express their rebellion against God and His good purposes. Early in Genesis we encounter Lamech, the ambitious boaster with two wives, and the mysterious "sons of God . . . [who] took wives for themselves, whomever they chose" (Gen. 6:2). Then God called Abraham out of idolatry and promised to bless all the families of the earth in him. But the problems between men and women did not resolve with Abraham. Instead, he

sought to save his own skin by passing off his wife as his sister and later agreed with Sarah to produce a son through a handmaid. His offspring—men such as Jacob and Reuben and Judah—fared no better.

The era of Patriarchs gave way to the Judges, a time when “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25), often to the great detriment of women. Then came the Kings and with them glimmers of hope. Yet even David, “a man after God’s own heart,” infamously failed in this area. And the accounts of how Solomon and David’s other sons interacted with women are distressing. Israel’s history marched on, but the problems did not end. At the close of the OT, Malachi voices the Lord’s witness against men who “have dealt treacherously” against their covenant wives (Mal. 2:14). Human history is a record of mankind’s spiritual failures, including the mistreatment of women.

Of course, all was not lost. Even as He announced Eve’s judgment God declared that her Seed would crush the serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15). What a remarkable paradox! There would come a great Child whose birth would be accompanied by a mother’s characteristic pains but whose life, death, and resurrection would insure that men and women could once again live toward one another in God’s image.

After millennia of Israel’s longing anticipation this son of Eve arrived with the angels’ stunning birth announcement (Luke 2). However, Jesus Christ’s introduction to the NT is through Matthew’s intriguing genealogy. One would expect a list of fathers and sons. But in addition, the Holy Spirit inscribes the names of five women in the Messiah’s family tree. His selection is astounding—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. What Scripture reveals about their personal stories makes each of these women the unlikeliest of candidates. Yet they are forever bound to our understanding of Jesus’ lineage. In the NT’s very first chapter God accentuates His grace by dignifying women whose contemporaries would never have labeled a “Proverbs 31 woman.”

Matthew’s genealogy is only the first sign of Christ’s transformational view of women. Jesus declared a high view of marriage, condemning a culturally accepted but errant view of divorce and exposing lust at its core. Jesus dignified women by mentioning them favorably in illustrations, such as the widow and her mite, the importunate woman, and the woman with leaven. Jesus disciplesd Mary and Martha and called the woman hunched over a “daughter of Abraham.” Jesus went out of His way to evangelize the Samaritan woman. He not only ministered to women of various ages and conditions but also received their ministry,

as Luke 8 relates. Jesus honored the faith of the sinful woman in contrast to Simon the Pharisee. Jesus insured that a woman would be remembered as part of the gospel account for her extravagant act of devotion. Even on the cross Jesus showed concern for His mother. And when the time came to validate the resurrection by eyewitnesses, God chose women, whose testimony was inadmissible in first-century Jewish courts.²

This transformation did not end with Christ's ascension to the Father's right hand. The gospel spread rapidly, and the church began to grow. Men and women alike were drawn as one into the body of Christ (Gal. 3:28). The Lord assigned men the responsibility to lead, but women served crucial roles too, both then (note, for example, the names in Romans 16) and now (think about our own assembly).

The Lord sent His Holy Spirit to indwell believers and move the writers of Scripture to speak from God. Consequently, we the children of God are being renewed in our elder Brother's image. For us as men, that means obeying apostolic exhortation to love our wives sacrificially and relate to older and younger women in purity. Paul teaches us through Titus that gentlemen conformed to Christ lead in love by serving, taking responsibility, showing respect, and controlling desires. By doing so, we "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" (Titus 2:10).

Why rehearse this familiar story? Contemporary culture attempts to assure equality between men and women by minimizing the differences. God's design is infinitely superior. Because He made us equally in His image, we are equally dignified, not in spite of our complementary differences and roles but through them. The beauty is in the uniqueness. The differences between men and women are not the unsightly products of the curse but the elegant fabric of creation. Scripture's own storyline teaches us as men how God views and treats women. Because God dignifies women, we too must honor them as gentlemen in His image.

² I am grateful for the impact of Pastor Vincent's message on May 14, 2017, "What Christ and the Gospel Did for Women." Much of this paragraph depends on notes from this sermon.

WEEK 2

September 9-September 15

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 1

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!*

Psalm 1:1

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 9	2 Sam 3	1 Cor 14	Eze 12	Ps 51
Sep 10	2 Sam 4, 5	1 Cor 15	Eze 13	Ps 52-54
Sep 11	2 Sam 6	1 Cor 16	Eze 14	Ps 55
Sep 12	2 Sam 7	2 Cor 1	Eze 15	Ps 56, 57
Sep 13	2 Sam 8, 9	2 Cor 2	Eze 16	Ps 58, 59
Sep 14	2 Sam 10	2 Cor 3	Eze 17	Ps 60, 61
Sep 15	2 Sam 11	2 Cor 4	Eze 18	Ps 62, 63

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

RECOVERING BIBLICAL MANHOOD

TOM KENDALL

"Culture is religion externalized." This maxim by Henry van Til is accurately illustrated in the contemporary societal attempt to blur, and ultimately extinguish, the divine distinctions of masculinity and femininity. The failures that result from a departure of true Biblical manhood are widespread, comprehensive and ultimately destructive. Although the most pernicious and virulent consequences of this loss of biblical masculinity are experienced primarily in the family, this dissipation disrupts and poisons the church, weakening its influence upon secular culture.

A measure of the magnitude and scope of the problem is the response to observations and applications of biblical principles defining the God given directives of God's design and order for the man-woman relationship. These imperatives of Scripture give no "wobble room" for usurpation of God's intentions for man's care for women with explicit reasoning, purpose and means to guide in this most essential demonstration of man's obedience to God. Yet, there is apathy, indifference and even hostility when the light of truth shines upon the darkness of the selfishness of man's heart.

Consider, for illustration, the impact courtesy and MANners have upon perspective and communication. When Sir Walter Raleigh put his cloak down in the puddle for the sake of his queen, he displayed a fitting standard for honor and nobility. Doesn't a wife see the demonstration of care and thoughtfulness underlying her husband's decision to open the door as she enters, position a chair as she sits or asks her if she wants the last portion? MANners are not for self, they are for others.

Courtesy is sacrificial symbolism and men are to lead by example. Crude, crass, careless; these are adjectives which describe the cad, immature and selfish behavior of a man who got what he wanted, but who has forgotten what he has. The magnificence, beauty, favor and blessing of a wife to a man are of immeasurable value. She is the very complement of the man to complete and conform him into the image of Christ. However, she can be so easily abused and taken for granted unless the man is a man of God. But this man of God, without the Holy Spirit motivated love of Christ, without the discipline of mind, body, emotions and will surrendered to Christ, without a hatred for the things God hates, without a

life of fervent, passionate, engaging, strategic prayer, will be found deficient, lacking in the demonstration of sacrificial symbolism, courtesy.

This call to biblical manhood is the call to discipleship. Self denial, cross bearing and following Christ finds a precise and exact expression in the covenant relationship of marriage. Courage that confronts intense opposition in the spiritual battles of life, confidence in the proven truths of Scripture and compassion that motivates by principle rather than pragmatism, characterizes a man whose ethic is shaped by the fear of God rather than the fear of man.

But refined, cultural manners do not necessarily represent a regenerated heart. Feigned respect is profanity and symbolized hypocrisy. MANners performed with love and loyalty, however, example fidelity and serve the establishing of strong interpersonal, and even intimate relationships, particularly in marriage. A man who disregards God's expectation of manliness can easily become abusive, tyrannical and despotic. This selfishness will be corruptive of a home-life where joy, peace, contentment and love should reign, but is stifled and quenched.

"As Christ loved the church", "...according to knowledge", "...with honor as the weaker vessel". These biblical standards for men necessitate a true spiritual humility which cannot exist in the spirit of pride, arrogance and self-dependency. Forcefulness, criticism, and sarcasm belie the confession of Christian maturity. Gentleness, a fruit of the spirit, will characterize the man whom the scripture identifies as "walking worthy of his vocation." But this gentleness is not passivity or inactivity; nor is it weakness or timidity. It is thoughtful action with selfless, loving determination. It is firmness without harshness. It is the mind and meekness of the Savior displayed in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, for better for worse.

Why are we witnessing a feminization of what was once masculine? Why are we seeing such an egalitarian trend in all segments of our culture? Why are women assuming combat positions in our military? These reversals, and many others, are signals of departure from God's design and purpose. God's plan is uncompromisingly clear. When man, under his head, Christ, fails to submit to His authority and control, the effects cascade with ultimate, pending catastrophe in the home, church and social order.

But God's mercy and gospel transforming, restorative power, when applied to confessing, repenting, submitting, desperate men, gives the

promise of grace, forgiveness, repair and ultimate reclaiming of lives and relationships that bring glory to God. Recovering biblical manhood is not only a rich blessing to the family, it is revival in the church edifying the people of God—and is a most powerful instrument of evangelism in our world.

WEEK 3

September 16-September 22

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Corinthians 6:15-20

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Philippians 4:4-9

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

[Treat] the younger women as sisters, in all purity.

1 Timothy 5:2a

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 16	2 Sam 12	2 Cor 5	Eze 19	Ps 64, 65
Sep 17	2 Sam 13	2 Cor 6	Eze 20	Ps 66, 67
Sep 18	2 Sam 14	2 Cor 7	Eze 21	Ps 68
Sep 19	2 Sam 15	2 Cor 8	Eze 22	Ps 69
Sep 20	2 Sam 16	2 Cor 9	Eze 23	Ps 70, 71
Sep 21	2 Sam 17	2 Cor 10	Eze 24	Ps 72
Sep 22	2 Sam 18	2 Cor 11	Eze 25	Ps 73

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

AS SISTERS, WITH ALL PURITY

MARK BATORY

Through Paul's exhortations to a young man in ministry, Timothy is admonished to be an example of the believer in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and *in purity* (1 Tim. 4:12). Paul instructs Timothy to not let anyone despise his youth, and then the apostle continues his exhortations for this young servant of Christ by grooming him in Christian etiquette.

Google's definition of *etiquette* is "the customary code of polite behavior in society or among members of a particular profession or group." Paul continues his instructions in 1 Timothy 5 by reminding Timothy what the customary code of polite behavior was in reference to older and younger men. When addressing this customary code toward older and younger women, he adds an important aspect: the older women were to be respected as mothers and the younger women were to be treated as sisters *with all purity*.

First Corinthians 16:13 says, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." It is interesting that Paul feels it necessary to tell these men to act like men, to be manly, and then he ends with the command to "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Cor. 16:14). Be a manly man, but in everything that you do, do it in love. This is the perfect definition of a gentleman.

Being a gentleman or practicing Christian etiquette is a necessity, but it takes on a unique dimension when it involves women. We are commanded to let everything that we do be done in love, and that command is overshadowed with *in purity*. How do we "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted" with a female and still protect ourselves *in purity*?

In the local church context, some cultures have addressed this subject by seating all of the women on one side of the church and all of the men on the other side. Some religions veil their women from head to toe. So in our culture, how and why do we maintain purity as we interact with women? Peter gives us our motivation or the "why" in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Peter gives us the "how" in 2 Peter 1:3-11: add to your faith moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, god-

liness, brotherly kindness, and love. God's Word tells us that if these qualities are ours and they are increasing, they will keep us from stumbling.

Satan is a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour and so often impropriety has occurred in situations where it should have and could have been avoided. For our purposes, the discussion of purity regarding relationships with women who are not our spouse will be limited to interacting with women at church or in the work place. Viewing other women as mothers or sisters can help tremendously, but Paul emphasizes *with all purity*. What are some precautions that will help us add moral excellence to our faith?

1. We are commanded to be kind to one another and tenderhearted. This translates into being courteous and compassionate, but we must be courteous and compassionate equally to all women and girls, not showing special favor to anyone. It is unfortunate in our day and age that chivalry (the combination of qualities expected of an ideal knight, especially courage, honor, courtesy, justice, and a readiness to help the weak) seems to be dead. Often this is due not so much to a concerted effort on the part of men to kill it, but a lack of awareness or possibly self-centeredness. We need to be intentional about learning proper protocols and teaching those to our sons.
2. Avoid singling out any one woman for favors, gifts, or special treatment. Encourage your wife to build relationships with the women with whom you interact regularly.
3. Be careful not to put yourself in a compromising situation. Avoid being alone with a female without your wife or another person present. This sounds like common sense, but it is amazing how circumstances can easily erode this resolve.
4. View women as equals in value though perhaps not equal in position. Women are not our servants.
5. Reserve flattery and compliments for your wife and daughter(s) alone. Complimenting a woman on her appearance sends the direct message that you noticed.

6. Be aware of how much time you spend with other women. Spending a lot of time with another woman relays a level of interest.
7. Avoid even casual physical contact. In our present day and age of the “Me Too” movement, there is absolutely no reason why you would need to have any form of casual physical contact with a woman. Touching a woman’s hand or her arm in conversation is unnecessary, but it can convey to her intentions or emotions you do not intend.
8. Use wisdom in greeting women. We are admonished several times throughout Scripture to “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” Greetings are a special expression of warmth and friendliness, but it is wise to never embrace a woman in greeting if she is not a relative or if your wife is not present.

James 1:13 and 14 say, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each person is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.”

The Lord Jesus was a perfect example through His interactions. He loved the world so much that He left His heavenly home to show us what grace looks like. He manifested kindness and mercy to a sinful world. He demonstrated compassion and gentleness, and He was genuinely interested and concerned about men and women. Let us follow His example in treating our sisters in Christ *with all purity*.

WEEK 4

September 23-September 29

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Peter 3:1-9

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

1 Peter 3:7

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 23	2 Sam 19	2 Cor 12	Eze 26	Ps 74
Sep 24	2 Sam 20	2 Cor 13	Eze 27	Ps 75, 76
Sep 25	2 Sam 21	Gal 1	Eze 28	Ps 77
Sep 26	2 Sam 22	Gal 2	Eze 29	Ps 78:1-37
Sep 27	2 Sam 23	Gal 3	Eze 30	Ps 78:38-72
Sep 28	2 Sam 24	Gal 4	Eze 31	Ps 79
Sep 29	1 Ki 1	Gal 5	Eze 32	Ps 80

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

UNDERSTAND YOUR WIFE

DAN DAHLHAUSEN

It is no secret that men and women were created differently (Genesis 2). By God's design, our differing physical, emotional, and spiritual strengths and weaknesses allow us to complement each other for His glory. As an example, in utero, boys' brains undergo a testosterone wash while girls' brains undergo an estrogen wash, with differing effects that last a lifetime. God's design was for us to work alongside each other as we carry out His purposes in our lives. These differences are good; however, they also contribute to misunderstandings, comedy routines, and book sales: *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus, What Men Say, What Women Hear, and If Men Could Talk*, to name a few. Men, we must take responsibility to govern our families according to scriptural principles. Let's consider the command given in 1 Peter 3:7, focusing on the first phrase; "You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."

In order to live with our wives in an understanding way, ("in knowledge"), we must not only learn about women in general, but more importantly, each of us must study our own wife specifically in order to discover her unique qualities, likes, dislikes... This takes time, effort, and communication! Yes men, that means you need to put down the paper or phone and spend one on one time together, talking to and listening to one another.

A central command God gives us regarding our marriage is for us to love our wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her... to nourish and cherish her (Ep 5:25-29.) These words bring up images of thoughtful, considerate, tender, respectful care for another. Not only does this care honor the Lord, but it also helps our wives to respond rightly towards us as a result, a win-win situation! There's no room for gratifying selfish desires here. We must not only tell our wives we love them, but daily show them in word and deed. And remember men, we must find out what our wife's "love language" is and respond to her accordingly.

Promote your wife's good by being a godly example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, 1 Timothy 4:12. As we spend time in His Word and subsequently study the Bible together, we are demonstrating both

our own need for sanctification and our desire for both of us to grow in Christ. As our wives see us going to God daily it will enable them to trust God and His working through us in the lives of our families.

We must not be sarcastic with or belittle our wives in any way, publicly or privately. 1 Thes 5:11 tells us to “encourage one another and build up one another.” Early in our marriage my wife and I determined to always build one another up, especially in public. This brings her such confidence and comfort, knowing that I will always be her biggest fan. The world is constantly belittling the role of motherhood. Help her to see God’s greater purposes for her life. Appreciate her and be grateful for all she does for you and the family. Don’t take her for granted. Praise her in public and in private.

Show your wife that you delight in her. Prov 5:18-19 commands, “Rejoice in the wife of your youth...Be exhilarated always with her love.” Don’t compare her with other women and be careful that you don’t ask too much of her or make unreasonable demands, especially regarding physical intimacy. Be considerate of her emotional and physical needs at all stages of life, and for those of you with children, be especially sensitive to your wife’s needs when the children are young and take such an emotional and physical toll. Don’t forget to date your mate! It doesn’t have to cost a dime or take a lot of time; it really is the thought that counts. She loves it when you take the time to let her know you’re thinking of her. Even a small gesture is greatly appreciated.

Be a team player; consult with her on big and little decisions. Let her know how much you need her and value her input. Listen to her, especially in matters which deal with the children. Your wife knows your children better than you and sees things that you don’t. Give her leeway in keeping the home. Trust her judgment. Be willing to help her with the children and with household chores. Working together around the home builds marital harmony and lets your wife know that you’re in this together for the long haul. Take responsibility for finances! Don’t let her worry about this. She feels secure in knowing that you’re working hard to provide for the family.

We should be willing to care and love our wives even when it is inconvenient and hard. In 1990 Robertson McQuilkin resigned as president of Columbia Bible College in order to be fulltime caregiver for his wife with

Alzheimer's Dementia. His response to God's providence in their relationship is inspiring. You can read about it here:

<https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/marriage/staying-married/commitment/till-death-do-us-part/>

I'm sure you're familiar with this quote by Matthew Henry, showing us the right attitude to have towards our wives. **"The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved by him."**

WEEK 5

September 30-October 6

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 19
Proverbs 31

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants,
And our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace.*
Psalm 144:12

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 30	1 Ki 2	Gal 6	Eze 33	Ps 81, 82
Oct 1	1 Ki 3	Eph 1	Eze 34	Ps 83, 84
Oct 2	1 Ki 4, 5	Eph 2	Eze 35	Ps 85
Oct 3	1 Ki 6	Eph 3	Eze 36	Ps 86
Oct 4	1 Ki 7	Eph 4	Eze 37	Ps 87, 88
Oct 5	1 Ki 8	Eph 5	Eze 38	Ps 89
Oct 6	1 Ki 9	Eph 6	Eze 39	Ps 90

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

A FATHER'S DAUGHTER

DOUG BECKER

If you are a regular reader of the Scriptures I expect that there are certain passages in the Bible that you would really rather avoid if you could. For me one of those passages is the story recorded in Genesis 19 about the sinful men of Sodom who attempted to break into Lot's house to molest the visiting angels. So I have to confess at the onset of my article that I was a bit surprised that my mind kept coming back to one part of that awful scene as I was thinking about what to encourage our men about in the area of developing a healthy, loving, and spiritually challenging relationship with their daughters. Romans 15:4 does tell us that *"whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."* I believe that we can profit from more than just the positive examples recorded in the Bible. We can also learn from the negative ones – like Lot.

And that brings us to the tragic part of this unpleasant scene. Genesis 19: 7-8 brings Lot into clear focus, on center stage as perhaps the worst example recorded in the Bible of a father's proper relationship with his daughters. Here is the substance of what he said – and what has been read (to his shame) by countless fathers and daughters down through the centuries:

"Please my brothers, do not act wickedly. Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men insasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof." [KJV]

His statement reveals many things about his failure as a father. But at the root there appears to have been an utter disregard of the value of these young women and consequently of the responsibility entrusted to him to be their protector – *their Dad*. I hope that his negative example will awaken each one of us to the great privilege we have if and when God entrusts daughters into our care. The Lord doesn't give daughters as cheap junk available to be thrown into the hands of lust-filled men. Far from that, He gives them as jewels meant to be valued, carefully nurtured, disciplined, – *and loved*.

What a different example would have been displayed if Lot had cried out something like, *"Leave my doorstep and go home. You will only touch these visitors and my virgin daughters – over my dead body!"*

The passage does not tell us that the daughters overheard their father's words but the sequel to this family drama, recorded at the end of the chapter, seems to indicate that their father's failures were directly tied to the ease with which they plotted to commit incest. So here is another thing we can learn from Lot. The relationship fathers develop over time with their daughters will bear fruit. The powerful example of a father, lived before the eyes of a child, a teenager, and then a young adult carries with it enormous weight – either for good or for evil.

We don't know whether Lot spent much time interacting with his daughters while they were growing up in his home. But his words indicate that they were more like strangers to him than daughters. As I look back over my parenting years, I believe that spending time with my daughters helped to build the strong, healthy father-daughter relationships we still very much enjoy. Spending time with them sends a strong message – *I love you and you are very important to me*. This provides a platform of credibility when we need to encourage, instruct, or correct them.

In closing let me share some thoughts I've had about what Lot's words conveyed (especially if they were overheard by his daughters) and what a good father's proper relationship to his daughter should communicate.

Failure as a Dad

You are worthless.

You have reason to fear.

I do not care very much about you.

You can't even trust your father.

Godly Dad

You were created in God's image and are of immense value to your mother and me.

You are safe and I will protect you until I give you to a man who will do the same.

I would give my life to protect you. I want to spend time with you because you are very important to me.

You can trust me. (By the way this is especially important for young women to learn since their thoughts of their Heavenly Father are often significantly affected by their thoughts about their earthly father.)

Your purity is not important.

Your female sexuality is a wonderful gift from God to be enjoyed in His timing with the man He chooses to be your husband.

Since our personalities and the personalities of our daughters are different from one another, the ways we go about developing this kind of healthy, loving, and spiritually challenging relationship will differ. One common element will be *time*. Being the right kind of father takes *time*. But let me share the perspective of a man who is the father of two adult, married, daughters. Every moment invested in them was well worth it and I wish I could do it all over again. Thankfully the Lord allows us to continue our role as a father long after they leave our homes.

I trust that this reminder of how Lot failed as a Dad will motivate each of us to consider how we can *do just the opposite!*

WEEK 6

October 7-October 13

SCRIPTURE READING

Ruth 1-4

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

*Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants,
And our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace.*

Psalm 144:12

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 7	1 Ki 10	Phil 1	Eze 40	Ps 91
Oct 8	1 Ki 11	Phil 2	Eze 41	Ps 92, 93
Oct 9	1 Ki 12	Phil 3	Eze 42	Ps 94
Oct 10	1 Ki 13	Phil 4	Eze 43	Ps 95, 96
Oct 11	1 Ki 14	Col 1	Eze 44	Ps 97, 98
Oct 12	1 Ki 15	Col 2	Eze 45	Ps 99-101
Oct 13	1 Ki 16	Col 3	Eze 46	Ps 102

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

RAISING SONS TO HONOR WOMEN

ALAN HUGHES

One of Jesus Christ's greatest impacts on the world was His elevation of women to a status higher than property. His healing of the woman with an issue of blood, raising a young girl from the dead, healing Peter's mother-in-law, and even just speaking with the Samaritan woman, all show that Jesus valued women in a way that was uncommon for the time. Our present culture has its own way of treating women, which does not come close to what the Bible says about the subject. It is surely not the way we, as Christian men, should want our sons to treat women.

So how do we raise our sons in today's culture to honor women in a Biblical manner? One way is to be a good example of honoring women, by honoring our own wives. This is a convicting statement for me, as I do not always model such exemplary behavior. However, there are some things that we can teach our sons about how to honor women, at the same time admitting to them that we are not perfect and don't always measure up to what the Bible teaches. To answer the question, we have to look at what the Word says on the topic.

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul urges Timothy to treat "the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity" (KJV). Clearly, the first part of this verse reflects the Fifth Commandment's teaching to "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (KJV). Paul was urging Timothy to honor older women as he would his own mother, which is a commandment with a promise. Then he tells Timothy to treat younger women as he would treat his own sister. This would have been protective advice for Timothy, and is good advice for our sons as well.

Paul's wise advice to Timothy can be applied to our own sons as we warn them to be honoring of young ladies as sisters, while at the same time, seeking God's will about marriage, presumably to one of those young women. Our challenge is, how do our sons put that into practice? Since God tells us that our wives are the "weaker vessels," we should have our sons practice that mindset before they are married. Some practical examples follow, many of which apply to both older and younger ladies.

Stand when a lady approaches you – this shows respect, and makes your seat available should she need one. We've also taught our sons to stand

when an older man approaches, and it has been satisfying to see them do this on their own, without being reminded. Be alert to opportunities to hold the door open for a lady, and offer to help carry things for her. When you meet a lady, wait until she offers her hand to shake before offering yours, and carry any ensuing conversation without dominating or interrupting. Have good manners overall, but especially good table manners. Help her when getting into or out of a car by opening and holding the door for her. Be sure not to defraud young ladies by leading them on beyond your true intentions. Please do not treat a young lady like just another one of the guys.

The list above, of course, is not exhaustive, but is a start. Young men don't just *know* how to behave, but have to be *taught*. So, we have to instruct with our words, which is easy to do, if we do it purposefully. The hardest part for us dads is instructing by our example. It takes a lot more thought to do it on purpose, consistently. But what about the "older women" part of this? How do we model that? Well, again, we teach almost everything by both word and example. Our sons are observing how we treat our own mothers, and that will either give weight to, or discredit our words.

As a mother ages, she needs to be honored by being taken care of in many ways: mowing her lawn, cleaning her house, bringing her meals, visiting with her, sharing what God is teaching you in your life, and so on. Is Paul telling Timothy to do this for all the older women in his church? I don't think so, because the passage goes on to instruct him that families should take care of their aging mothers, and gives very specific instructions about taking care of older women who meet the qualifications of a "widow indeed."

Paul is most likely addressing the interpersonal interactions between Timothy and the older women. He is urging Timothy to treat them with respect, listen to their wise advice, and generally honor them in conversations and situations. It has been said that as a young man treats his mother, so will he likely treat his wife. Therefore, we must be diligent to purposefully train our sons at an early age the Biblical design for men and women, and how men are to relate to the women in their lives. It is important that we teach our sons to honor women of all ages as weaker vessels, and as heirs with us in Christ, with both our words and our examples. May God give us the grace and wisdom to do both, on and with purpose.

WEEK 7

October 14-October 20

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Timothy 5:1-16

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James 1:27

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 14	1 Ki 17	Col 4	Eze 47	Ps 103
Oct 15	1 Ki 18	1 Thes 1	Eze 48	Ps 104
Oct 16	1 Ki 19	1 Thes 2	Dan 1	Ps 105
Oct 17	1 Ki 20	1 Thes 3	Dan 2	Ps 106
Oct 18	1 Ki 21	1 Thes 4	Dan 3	Ps 107
Oct 19	1 Ki 22	1 Thes 5	Dan 4	Ps 108, 109
Oct 20	2 Ki 1	2 Thes 1	Dan 5	Ps 110, 111

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

HONORING WIDOWS

BRUCE ARNOLD

God truly has a special heart for widows. James 1:27 reminds us that “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.” Deuteronomy 10:18 states that “[God] executes justice for the orphan and the widow” Repeatedly the fatherless and widows are identified together as those who need our care. (Psalm 68:5;

Why is this the case? Historically widows have been among the most vulnerable and neglected of society. They were often classed with the fatherless and needy as second-class citizens and given very little honor. Widows are regularly cited in the Old Testament as victims of neglect and oppression. Sometimes the abuse of widows was even exercised by rulers and religious figures that God had appointed over His people. These actions were denounced by God. (Is. 1:23; Mt 23:14; Mark 12:40; Lk 20:47) In contrast, God’s servant, Job, is lifted up by the Holy Spirit as one who consistently feared God and hated evil. Job’s final appeal in chapter 31 to his accusatory friends repeatedly asserts his innocence and righteous life-style. He points out that he NEVER mistreated the widow, the needy, or the fatherless. He asserted that he never “caused the eye of the widow to fail” and that he faithfully guided widows - even from his earliest years. (Job 31:16-23)

It is also worthy to note that one of the earliest and most serious issues of contention in the early church involved the need for equal care of all of the widows (Acts 6). God clearly directed church leaders that they were to be consistent in this area. The first recorded contention between the Hebrew and the Hellenized (i.e., Greek speaking) Christians was also regarding the care of the widows. God’s directives that were later given to Timothy for administering the care of widows by the church focused on older widows who displayed certain spiritual qualifications: “Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God, and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.” Those widows who met the qualifications were to be honored and cared for financially by the church as “widows indeed.” (I Timothy 5:3;16) An example of such a person was Anna. She is described in Luke 2:37 as one who “Never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.”

The believers were further instructed in regard to the care of the widows who had children and grandchildren who could give them care. They were to assume responsibility for the care of their widowed family-member. (I Tim 5:16). "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (I Timothy 5:8)

So how might we as men demonstrate biblical honor to our widows in the 21st century? First, we should view the widows – especially those among us who are of godly character - with utmost respect. We should make ourselves alert to their special physical needs – especially the needs of those who are "widows indeed." God appointed deacons to fulfill this ministry in the early church. Likewise, we should communicate needs that we observe to our deacons if we are not able to personally meet those needs. Widows should be honored by the church in a special way even if they do not need financial remuneration. There is an overall responsibility – that of "visiting the widows and orphans in their distress" as is recorded in James 1:27. The immediate context of this command is significant. Caring for widows is one of the major and direct applications that James makes to his readers when he commands them to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only." James 1:27 is followed by an extended discussion in James 2: "Do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism." Clearly widows with a lower financial status should always be regarded with equality and given honor and care when possible by the members of the church family.

In addition, we should look for ways to draw widows into involvement with the ministry of our church. There are ministries of prayer, helps, and hospitality that widows in the church are able to exercise – especially in ministering to younger women and children in the assembly. Widows may be encouraged to participate in missionary projects and fellowships. Many widows have availed themselves of the opportunities that our church offers to participate in a weekly Bible study. Some prepare tracts and correspondence materials to send to those who are seeking spiritual help through mailed resources.

We might also invite widows to our homes and other gatherings to give them more opportunities for fellowship. We as men must also remind our families of the vital spiritual truth that every member of the body of Christ is of equal significance before the Lord and thus should be respected and truly honored as a vital part of Christ's church. Our wives

and children should become acquainted with the widows in the church, and we as families should make prayer for them a part of our family worship. We might point out the older widows in the church and encourage our children to introduce themselves and if possible befriend them. That would bring great joy to many of our dear elderly widows!

Let me close with a very specific application that struck home for me. All of us realize that the older widows may become - as a result of age or illness - one of our "shut-ins". In some cases that means that they are no longer physically able to be in our services. I have occasionally read a name on the shut-in list (which appears at the end of the congregation prayer requests every week) and have realized - to my shame - that I do not know that person who is listed. I have to ask myself, "Did I make the effort to know her when she was attending our services?"

As our Senior saints are weakened by illness and age we might have to someday show our children the name of one of our widows who was once active in the ministry and has now been put on the shut-in list. What a joy it will be if when we ask our children, "Do you know who that is?" that they can give a heart-felt response, "Yes, we do. We have gotten to know her and love her, and we have prayed for her! And now we would like to send her cards, visit her, and encourage her." What a blessing that would be us and to the widows in the MCBC family!

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. James 1:27

WEEK 8

October 21-October 27

SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 20:17-38

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.

Mark 10:45

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 21	2 Ki 2	2 Thes 2	Dan 6	Ps 112, 113
Oct 22	2 Ki 3	2 Thes 3	Dan 7	Ps 114, 115
Oct 23	2 Ki 4	1 Tim 1	Dan 8	Ps 116
Oct 24	2 Ki 5	1 Tim 2	Dan 9	Ps 117, 118
Oct 25	2 Ki 6	1 Tim 3	Dan 10	Ps 119:1-24
Oct 26	2 Ki 7	1 Tim 4	Dan 11	Ps 119:25-48
Oct 27	2 Ki 8	1 Tim 5	Dan 12	Ps 119:49-72

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

AUTHORITY—WITH HUMILITY

BRIAN COLLINS

In Shakespeare's "Macbeth," Lady Macbeth meditates on the nature of true manhood. She avers that Macbeth is too womanly: "He is too full of 'the milk of human kindness'" (1.5.18). In contrast, she is determined to be the man; her milk will be turned to gall (1.5.42-49). At first Macbeth operates with a more biblical view of manhood: he will "dare do all that may become a man; who dares do more is none" (1.7.46-47). To which Lady Macbeth retorted, "When you durst do it, then you were a man; and to be more than what you were, you would be so much more the man" (1.7.56-58). In the end, Shakespeare places Lady Macbeth in the role of an Eve who leads her husband to seize the forbidden fruit.

The issues raised by this play are timely, for there is great confusion in our culture both about manhood and about authority. The idea that husbands should lead their wives (Eph. 5:22-33), that the leadership in the church should be male (1 Tim 2:11-3:2; 1 Cor. 11:2-16, NASB), and that men should exercise authority in other spheres of life is increasingly controversial even among Christians.

Part of this problem may be found in our society's rejection of biblical teaching about the leadership of husbands and elders. But part of the problem may be with unbiblical ideas about what manhood and authority ought to be.

If manhood is to be bereft of kindness or restraint and if authority is simply the seizure of power for one's own benefit, then it is little wonder that people resist the claim that men are to exercise certain kinds of authority that women are not to exercise.

But Jesus told his disciples not to take their cues for how authority is exercised from the Gentiles (Mark 10:42). In contrast to Gentile rule, Jesus told the disciples that they were to be great by becoming the "slave of all" (Mark 10:44).

This model for biblical leadership has deep roots in the Old Testament. The book of Samuel is the book about the establishment of the monarchy in Israel, and humility is the central theme of the book. At the opening of the book Hannah praises God for bringing down the proud and raising up the humble (1 Sam.2:1-10). At the end of the book David says, "You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them

down" (22:8). Similarly, in Daniel 4 God humbles the proud Nebuchadnezzar. He reveals that "the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest [humblest] of men" (Dan 4:17).

Of course, it is Christ, the humblest of men, whom the Most High sets over the realm of mankind (cf. Phil. 2:8-11). This is why Jesus pointed to Himself as the example of proper authority: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45).

The example of Jesus is directly applied to husbands and church leadership. Jesus said the Gentile rulers "lord it over" people (Mark 10:42). But Peter says that elders are not to be "lording it over those allotted to [their] charge" (1 Pet. 5:3). Likewise, Christ is the example for the leadership of husbands, most notably in the way He "gave Himself up" for the church (Eph. 5:25).

The emphasis on humility in leadership does not negate the leadership. Elders are truly to exercise oversight over the church (1 Pet. 5:2), husbands are to be heads to whom their wives submit (Eph. 5:22-24), and kings are to lead their people (2 Sam. 5:2).

But biblical leaders exercise their authority for the benefit of those whose care is entrusted to them. They exercise authority at a cost to themselves so that those subject to their authority flourish.

Kings in the Old Testament were often called shepherds. Shepherds truly lead the sheep. But the job of shepherd is not a glorious one. The shepherd endures much hardship to protect and care for the sheep. This is also the imagery applied to elders. They are pastors, shepherds. And the idea could be extended to husbands and fathers who are to shepherd their families.

If we are going to maintain the Bible's teaching regarding male leadership in the home and in the church, we men need to follow Christ in living as humble leaders who lead for the benefit of those under our care.

WEEK 9

October 28-November 3

SCRIPTURE READING

Ephesians 5

TRUTH FOR MEDITATION

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

Ephesians 5:25

M'CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Oct 28	2 Ki 9	1 Tim 6	Hos 1	Ps 119:73-96
Oct 29	2 Ki 10	2 Tim 1	Hos 2	Ps 119:97-120
Oct 30	2 Ki 11, 12	2 Tim 2	Hos 3, 4	Ps 119:121-144
Oct 31	2 Ki 13	2 Tim 3	Hos 5, 6	Ps 119:145-176
Nov 1	2 Ki 14	2 Tim 4	Hos 7	Ps 120-122
Nov 2	2 Ki 15	Tit 1	Hos 8	Ps 123-125
Nov 3	2 Ki 16	Tit 2	Hos 9	Ps 126-128

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:

AS CHRIST LOVES THE CHURCH

JERID JONES

A wonderful background to a flower garden is the sunflower. With modern hybridizing they come in many varieties and colors. Sunflowers were on my mind recently, because I enjoy flowers and because I pass two sunflower plants in my travels, one on either side of a driveway. They are tall and majestic, each with one massive bloom approximately 12" across. One striking detail about each of these two plants is that the bloom is so heavy with seeds that the head of the plant is bowed completely over and facing the ground. Recently, while passing those bowing sunflowers, my thoughts turned to my wife, not because she was especially burdened at the time, but because of what the Lord had been teaching me through the years about my relationship with her. In short summary, I was learning that if my behavior toward my wife was not Christ-like, it placed a head-bowing burden on her. My mind went back to the time when the lesson was especially vivid...

Repeatedly, I read the words. I wondered why these words never had such significance to me before? Perhaps I was misunderstanding or misinterpreting what I read. Maybe I was over-reacting, and the words were not as critical or demanding as they sounded. But the more I studied and meditated on these words of God, the more the burden grew. The Spirit's sword was painfully cutting my heart and mind with these five words, "*gave Himself up for her.*" In its fuller context, I was being taught, "*Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her*" (Ephesians 5:25). With vivid clarity I was beginning to see that my responsibility to my wife was far deeper than I had ever thought. In fact, believing that my life was planned by the Lord to be a ministry to my wife—a ministry of the same kind or nature as Christ's was to the individual members of His church—was correctly understanding the passage. In other words, my behavior toward my wife was to be characterized by nothing short of a willingness to lose my life for her—a complete sacrifice for her benefit. It is not overreacting to think that the "giving up" involved in a crucifixion was intended by the Lord as an illustrative model for my character, decisions, and attitude as a husband.

As the days and months went by, I began to evaluate what I needed to change in order to closer exemplify the sacrificial love my Savior displayed, and still displays for me in my behavior toward my wife. What I found rather quickly was that other men of God agreed that the passage

was calling for a kind of love not generally understood by mankind. One author referred to the required love as “cruciform love” and wrote, “Hence the one piece of instruction Paul gives husbands— ‘*Love your wives, as Christ loved the church*’ (Eph. 5:25)—could hardly be more radical. To reproduce cruciform love, to take up the life of your wife and make it your own—to look deeply, act quickly, and empty fully—represents a love far beyond most husbands’ aspirations.” The same author went on to mention that C. S. Lewis observed in his book *The Four Loves*, “this is hardly the husband ‘we should all wish to be;’ rather, it’s the one whose marriage ‘is most like a crucifixion; whose wife receives most and gives least, is most unworthy of him, is—in her own mere nature—least lovable.’ ” Chrysostom wrote in his explanation of this passage, “if it be necessary to give thy life for her, or to be cut in ten thousand pieces, or to endure any other suffering whatever, do not refuse it; and if you suffer thus, not even so do you do what Christ has done; for you indeed do so being already united to her, but He did so for one that treated Him with aversion and hatred” (emphasis mine).

The life-long application of this lesson for me is that I need to be a self-sacrificing servant to my wife. Sacrifice for her needs to be applied daily in ways that accurately demonstrate the love that her Savior has for her. He is always gentle, kind, forgiving, helping her as He strives to lift up her bowed head to Him. My desire is to be the kind of Christ-like man that my wife would enjoy loving. Because I am concerned that she not be unnecessarily burdened with physical, emotional, and spiritual care, I endeavor to better learn how to take my burdens to the Lord in prayer and find Him to be the solution to my trouble, rather than unloading on my wife. Time with the Lord in the morning has taken on a new level of meaning as I ask the Lord to teach me to be the kind of husband that gives himself up for his wife tangibly. On any given day, I have the privilege of bearing some physical or spiritual burden for her, with the hope that in so doing she will be enabled to lift up her bowed head to her wonderful Savior and gaze on His lovely face.



— **1 PETER 1:22-23** —

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.