

God's Design for Marriage - Session Two

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Welcome to our second session on this video series called, God's Design for Marriage. This session is entitled The Ministry of Marriage. And I'm not sure that we often naturally think of marriage as a ministry. It clearly is. Explain where that concept comes from.

It basically comes from the commands that are given to the husband and the wife in marriage to fulfill their roles.

I like to think of it as a ministry and I believe it truly is because it helps people to understand that they've been called by God to take care of one another in marriage. And that's what we're going to be talking about in this series today. So here we go with session number two.

We are starting with part two tonight, and as you're going to see on the screen, we're going to be calling this the Ministry of Marriage. And I want to give you a little background on why I refer to it as a ministry.

Sue and I spent the first five years of our married life just doing our own thing. I was a rock and roll disc jockey and she was working in banking and finance. And we were going our own way and doing our own thing and we did not go to church at all.

I felt like when I left home at 18, I'd been liberated from that particular noose around my neck and didn't really have any interest in going back ever again, frankly. And so here we were just living our lives and we were young. When we got married, I was 20. Sue was 17. And so, there's that too, the youth part of things. But you can just about imagine after those first five years our marriage was pretty much a train wreck.

And when we got saved, when we gave our lives to the Lord and began to walk with Jesus, He began to speak to us about marriage and about our roles as husband and wife. And one of the very first things that the Lord impressed upon me was that when we came together as husband and wife and made our promises one to another, we were entering in to not just a marriage, not just a

covenant, like we talked about last week, certainly those things, but also we were entering into ministry.

We were entering into a role whereby we were called to minister one to another. And I'm talking about ministering to the needs of the other person. And I use the word, ministry very purposefully because I want you to understand that your ministry in your marriage is no less significant than any other ministry.

Or like, say the ministry of, like, myself as a pastor. The calling that you have in your marriage, to function in that role of ministry toward your spouse is no less significant than the calling that a pastor or teacher or elder would receive to minister within the church. Or any other calling for that matter.

It is a true ministry that God has called us to. In fact, it is your first ministry. One of the things that Paul said when he wrote to Timothy regarding the choosing of elders is to make sure that someone's family was in order, that their home was being taken care of, and that things were settled in the home where the ministry of the home was happening. And Paul basically said, if a man isn't ministering in his home, he has no business ministering in the church.

Now that's a paraphrase of what Paul was saying, but that's the essence, that's the gist of what he was passing along. And so, I want you to understand that your role in marriage is a ministry that God expects you to carry out.

Now, if you're like Sue and I were, when we came into our relationship with the Lord after those first five years, you're probably wondering what exactly does this ministry entail? And that's what we started to learn. And at first it was almost like that deer-in-the-headlight sort of a thing. I didn't know where to turn. I didn't know. I knew that God had called me to a ministry, but I didn't know what that ministry was really all about or how to do it.

And so, it took time over years of really looking into the word and frankly, watching some examples, bad as well as good in terms of marriages, Christian marriages that I saw going on right in front of me.

And I began to learn over a period of time that this thing that we call marriage is very much a ministry that God expects us to take care of. In other words, what I'm saying to you is that God is looking to you. Whether you are the husband or the wife, God is looking to you to fulfill your ministry in the home, in the marriage, to take care of whatever needs are there. And not just needs.

When we talk about needs, we certainly have a lot of things that we need in common. As a man, I have needs. As a woman, Sue has needs and many of those needs are the same. However, the Bible gives us some important insights into which needs are greater for the man and which needs are greater for the wife.

And God's Word is revealing these things for us so that we can more effectively do our ministry in the home. This is the cool part. God doesn't just call you into the ministry of marriage and say, here, now I've given you a ministry now do it, get it done, and leave us to scramble and say okay, great. What am I supposed to do?

But he gives us very specific insight from his Word as to how to best meet our needs. And I'm probably not going to surprise you when I say that the greatest need of a woman is very different from the greatest need of a man. Again, even though we have needs in common, the ones that are on the top of each of our need list are very different.

And so, what we're going to begin with here tonight is we're going to talk about first, the ministry of the husband to the wife. So, we're going to begin talking specifically to the guys and we're going to talk to you about meeting the need of your wife. And not just the need, but the greatest need that she has. All right?

And what we're going to do is we're going to be looking at some passages in the book of Ephesians. And we will have these up on the screen for you, but we're going to begin with Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 25. And it's a very simple exhortation to the men. And it goes like this.

Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)

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

Husbands, love your wives, (And then it doesn't just tell you to love your wife. It tells you how to love her. You are to love her) as (And then he goes on to explain how) Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

In other words, sacrificially. So the word to husbands regarding your wife's greatest need is that she be loved. And I'm not saying that a woman doesn't need also to have compassion shown to her, kindness, respect, all those sorts of things. I'm saying that the Bible, God's Word reveals that her greatest need is for love.

It's interesting, I've watched over the years my some 40 years as a pastor, I've watched a lot of couples come and go, and I've watched their marriages and I've watched the dynamic between couples. And it's interesting. I have seen women who had very little of what this world has to offer in terms of material wealth or possessions, but I've seen women like that who were just deliriously happy. Because of one simple thing. They knew that they knew their husband adored them. They knew that he loved his wife. And that alone gave her that sense of well-being in the marriage relationship.

On the other hand, I've seen women who had very, a great deal of what this world has to offer in a material sense. They've had the cars, the nice houses, the nice clothes, and a lot of other things that go along with it. And I've seen women like that who were miserable because they were not confident of their husband's love. Of all the things that God could say to a man when He speaks through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the apostle Paul in this letter to Ephesians, of all the things God could say to the husband. He says this: husbands make sure you love your wife. And you'll notice that it doesn't say love her if you feel like it or love her even if she's lovable. It says husbands, love your wives.

In other words, be loving to your wife. There's this story and I'm not even sure if it's true or not, but there's a story I used to hear someone tell about a couple that came to a pastor for marriage counseling and they're starting to talk about their marriage and they're hinting about the fact that things are a little bit raw in their relationship. And things aren't going very well.

But they finally took a breath from talking to the pastor as if to see, to gauge his response. And he simply said one thing: Husbands love your wives. And they sat there for a moment, fidgeted a little bit nervously and said,

Okay, let's do this again. Pastor, I'm not sure you really understand the full brunt of what we're saying to you. We're not getting along very well is what we're saying and things are tough right now.

And the pastor said, husbands love your wives. And at this the husband got a little bit more irritated. He said, pastor I still don't think you understand what I'm saying. I don't like this woman. And the Pastor said, husbands love your wives.

And finally, the guy got irritated to the point of anger and he said, pastor you don't get it! I hate being around this woman and I don't want to be around her anymore. And the pastor simply said, husbands love your wives.

Now, what the husband in that sort of a situation, again, whether it's true or not, I'm not sure, but what the husband didn't understand is that the command for husbands to love their wives is not based on anything other than obedience. God calls a man to love his wife. He commands a husband to love her.

Now see, that flies in the face of what we've learned in the world. Back when I was in, in a top 40 radio doing my thing, playing the hits, I didn't realize until I got out of radio how much we were preaching to people with the music we played. And I mean that seriously.

We were preaching a message and much of the message, of course, a lot of the music, is about love and relationships and romance and things like that. But it's also about when romance comes to an end and when love comes to an end and when marriages come to an end. There are a lot of songs written about that sort of a scenario.

And one of the themes that I heard over and over again, in fact. There was a song, specifically with this title, it was, *After The Love Is Gone*. You might remember it. I think it came out in the 70s, which is probably before some of you, but *After The Love Is Gone*.

I guess what the message was of that song after the love is gone, the world doesn't have an answer for after the love is gone. They don't know what to do. And so, they basically say what are you going to do after the love is gone? I guess you go look for love somewhere else. They really don't have an answer.

The Bible has an answer and it begins with the husband. We'll get to the wife in a minute, but it begins with the husband walking in obedience to his Savior, right?

It's not the husband looking at his wife and deciding whether or not he wants to love her, or looking at her and determining whether she's lovable in his eyes. Has nothing to do with those things. If he's a believer in Jesus Christ and walking with the Lord, it's a matter of obedience. God's Word tells me, Paul, love your wife.

I don't care how you feel. I don't care what you're going through. I don't care what's happening in your life right now. Love your wife. Show love to your wife. That was a mind blower to me when that revelation hit me and it hit me in a very powerful way. Because you see, the details I haven't gotten into with you as it relates to where Sue and I were after our first 5 years of marriage is that we were in trouble. Our marriage was in trouble because we had hurt each other

very deeply. I won't get into details, but you can just about imagine where two people who aren't walking with the Lord, aren't living for Jesus, and are living in the ways of the world could hurt one another in marriage. We did that. And it was a situation where our marriage looked very much like it was about to come to an end.

In fact, Sue and I did pretty much everything except go to an attorney and start the divorce proceedings. We separated for a while. We were living in different locations. It was a train wreck. And then we got saved and Jesus began to speak to us about our marriage.

And I got to tell you, when you've trounced on one another's hearts, the last thing you want to hear from God or anybody else is get back in there and love.

And as a man, this is the command that I was getting from the scripture. Paul, love your wife. You don't understand God. I don't love her. That's been gone for a while now.

That's not the point, God says. You get in there and you walk in obedience. And I'll meet you at the place of obedience.

And I learned that lesson very powerfully during that season and Sue had to learn it too. Because she had to go through a lot of the same emotions and rollercoaster feelings that I was going through.

I remember one particular point. I hopped in my car to go get something at the grocery store. And there were times that grief and sorrow and hurt would just come upon me like a wave of the ocean and I'd be fine one second and the next minute it would just roll over me.

And I don't know if you've ever played in the ocean and gotten caught in the breakers. It'll just take you for a tumble and deposit you on the beach, spitting and gulping, and you don't even know how you got there because you're head over heels. And that's how those emotions would feel. And I pulled into the parking lot there at the grocery store and I turned off my car and this wave of emotion just came over me.

And I remember saying to the Lord, I can't do this. I just can't do this. And the Lord, in one of the few times in my life, spoke to me very gently, but very strongly, and simply said, all I'm asking for you is to obey Me. Just put one foot in front of the other, and walk out what I've told you to do, and I'll do the rest.

And that, too, was an incredible revelation to my heart because the Lord helped me to understand that what I was trying to do is I was trying to dredge up the love. I heard or I saw in the Word of God, husbands love your wives, and I was trying to make it happen and I knew that it wasn't there. The love wasn't there.

And so, here I was trying to dig this thing out of the depths of my soul. And it's like, God, I can't do this. I just can't do it. God said, I'm not expecting you to do that. All I want you to do is obey me. You step out in faith.

And He reminded me about Peter. Peter couldn't walk on the water either, but he still had to climb up to the side of the boat, swing his legs over toward the water, and push off. And that's when he started to walk on the water. When he stepped out in faith, and out of obedience to the voice of his Master who said, come.

And I began to learn that this whole love thing was in God's hands. Not only did the Lord bring healing to our marriage in an incredibly fast period of time, but He returned to the love that we thought there was no way we were going to get back.

Not only did he return the love, He put it back in ways that we had never felt before. And here we are 45 years later. By the grace of God, because He is able to restore what we sometimes fritter away in our foolishness. We begin with husbands, love your wife.

Now here's the problem. When I say husbands, love your wives, I know that I'm speaking to..., forgive me for saying this, I'm speaking to men who have a man brain. And when you hear those words, you process them through your man brain. And what that means is when it comes to the, how, of loving your wife or the things you might do to show or say to your wife, I love you, you're going to again, process that through your man brain.

Let me just tell you guys right now, that's not going to cut it. Because again, you're probably not going to be surprised when I say that men and women think very differently. And one of the things we all have to understand about our wives, is that they are relational. And that's an important thing up on the screen there. You can see that's the key right there. Guys,

<i>Women are Relational</i>

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And what that means is their sense of well-being is predicated on their closest relationships. And there's no closer relationship than the one that your wife has with you. And what that means is when a woman's relationships are not good, she's not good.

Everything she thinks about her life, whether it's her marriage, her home, her extended family or whatever, it's predicated on relationships. In fact, you get women in a room who've never met one another before, and they start talking. Some of the first questions women are going to ask each other have to do with relationships.

The first, one of the first things a woman will say to another woman is, so are you married? Do you have any children? Those are usually the first words that, that come out of the chute. Men don't ask those questions. That's not the first one.

The first thing men ask, what do you do for a living? We'll talk about that in just a little bit. But see, so it's a very different dynamic between a man and a woman.

Women are relational. What does that mean? What am I saying to you? I'm saying that if her relationship isn't good, she's not good. In fact, there's a proverb, let me show you this on the screen. It's from Proverbs chapter 30, and it says,

Proverbs 30:21-23 (ESV)

Under three things the earth trembles; under four it cannot bear up: a slave when he becomes a king, a fool when he is filled with food: an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maidservant when she displaces her mistress.

Under three things the earth trembles; (That's poetic language to say it's an unbearable situation. And then he goes on to say,) under four it cannot bear up: (And he then lists these things) a slave when he becomes a king, a fool when he is filled with food: (And I want you to notice number three, which I've even highlighted there on the screen for you) an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maidservant when she displaces her mistress.

The Bible says that it is unbearable for a woman to be married and to feel that she is unloved. Now, here's the problem. It is very possible. And ladies, this is where I need you to hear me.

It is very possible for you to feel unloved in your marriage and to be very much loved by your husband. I want you to know that with a certainty. We men are frustrated lovers. I'm just telling you right now, we really stink at effectively communicating that we love our wives. Why? Because we do it through our man brain. We think, because again, we're occupational and so forth, we think in terms of what would make me feel good. And that sort of thing. And it's usually very, very different.

Many years ago, I had a couple that I was working with in marriage counseling, and I realized that there was a real disconnect in their lives. That it's like they were speaking a different language to each other. And they were just missing each other.

So, I gave them an exercise while we were sitting there and I had them sit up a little bit apart from one another. I gave them a piece of paper and a pencil and I said, first of all. I said to the woman, I want you to write down the top 10 ways your husband either could or does communicate to you that he loves you. Top 10, right? She says, okay. So, then she gets to work and then I go to the husband.

Now you, number your piece of paper from 1 to 10. And I want you to write down the top 10 ways that you show, or communicate to your wife that you love her. It was an incredible experiment because, when they finally finished, they were not on each other's radar.

The wife, her top thing of how he could say, I love you, wasn't even on his list. After doing that experiment, it was very eye opening for me, I mean, I learned a lot from that and we made some headway related to that. But I thought to myself, I really ought to do this too.

And this was quite a while ago. Sue and I still had small kids at home, so I went home after that counseling session and I said to Sue, what are the, what's the number one way that I communicate to you that I love you? What says it the most?

And she thought about it for a while. And she said, when you asked me to go for a walk. I was like, you're joking. Why in the world would that say, I love you? She said, I've been home with the kids all day. And when we go for a walk, it's just the two of us. And you know that I like to walk. It's something I like to do. And it gives me a chance to debrief and tell you how my day went. And it shows me that you care.

Okay, whatever. Wouldn't have been on my list. Wouldn't have even been on my list. Now, the thing you've got to understand about that is that her response was based on the life we were living at that time. Again, we had 4 kids and they were all still at home. Now they're all grown and out of the home.

If I were to ask Sue that question now, she would probably come up with a very different response because we go for walks all the time and because we're free to do that. And frankly, we even, we work together all day long, so, we're constantly together. It's a different dynamic. Life has changed.

The point of this is that the way, guys, your wife hears you say that you love her, whether by word or action, is going to change over time. Here's the key you need to be able to do. You need to be able to speak her language. You need to be able to act or speak in a way that she hears. I love you. Right?

Now, I had another couple one time in marriage counseling, and I got the sense that he really did love her, but she didn't hear it at all. So, I said, in the midst of this counseling session, I said, all right, ma'am, why don't you tell him right now? What's the best thing he could do to communicate his love to you? She said, forget it.

I was taken aback. I said, I beg your pardon. She said, no, there's no way I'm going to tell him that. I said, why? And she said something that I will never forget. And frankly, I think this is one of the biggest lies that I've ever heard. If he really loved me, he'd know. Ladies, nothing could be further from the truth.

As I said, we men, we're frustrated lovers. We don't get hints. And we don't read minds. And we think with our man brain. And it's very different from your woman brain. And we struggle to understand how to best communicate our love to you. We love, but we struggle to say it. And we struggle to say it in a way that you're going to hear it.

And so, what I have begun to do with married couples, and I'm going to do it with you tonight, is ladies, I'm going to challenge you. I'm going to challenge you to communicate to your husband how he can best communicate to you, showing you actions or with words, that he loves you. And I want you to jettison the idea that if he really loved you, he'd know the answer to that question. He doesn't know. I'm just... we had a meeting, we decided, right? We don't get it.

Here's the basis on which ladies, I'm asking you, encouraging you to do this. Your husband has a ministry that has been given to him by God. It is your job to

help him successfully function in that ministry. His ministry calling is to love you, sacrificially, just as Christ loved the church, okay? That's your husband's ministry, ladies.

Your calling is to come alongside and support him in his ministry. And you do that by communicating how he can successfully show you and communicate his love, and that is so important. But it's not just the woman, it goes the other side as well. Now let's talk about the ministry of the wife to her husband.

And to this, we're going to stay here in Ephesians chapter 5. And this time we're going to look at verse 33 and it's the very end of verse 33. And it simply says this,

Ephesians 5:33 (ESV)

...and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

...and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

You might look at that and say that's interesting. It's just - women are supposed to respect their husbands. Is that it? Yeah, ladies, that's it. That is your husband's greatest need. Now, he needs to be loved. Sure. Just like you need to be respected. But your greatest need is to be loved. His greatest need is to be respected. And that's why under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God moved upon the apostle Paul to write that to wives.

Wives, see that you respect your husband. Why? Remember we said that women are relational? Once again, we look at a man and we see, what is he? He is occupational. It's what he does. Again, that's why when men get together and they've never met each other before, they ask what they do. What do you do for a living? How long have you been there? So on and so forth.

It's also the reason why you can have an argument with your husband in the morning and he'll come back from work and he might even be angry when he leaves for work and slam the door, peel out of the driveway and the whole nine yards and he gets back and he's happy, he's had a good day and the wife is wrecked.

Because again, she's relational, and she's been carrying the burden of the fact that this thing has just gone south when he left this morning and she's been worrying all day long, and he went off to work and had a good day, because he's occupational, and when he goes to work, he feels good about himself.

It just feeds that sense of his own personal worth and he does his job and the people at his work are saying, hey, good job, man. And he's like, yeah!, and he's all about that.

Ladies, that's why he comes home and he's like, hi, hon. What do we, what are we going to do tonight? Do you want to go out? And she's like, what do you... go out? We got to talk.

He's like, for what? What do we need to talk about? This morning. The thing... He's like, yeah, that's ancient history. He went to work and now he's better because he's occupational. The relational aspect of the relationship is not the primary thing that makes him tick.

And that's something that women have to understand going into this. It's not that he doesn't care. It's just that God has created the man to get built up in different ways and to gain his sense of, I guess, his own personal worth. So, a wife is called to respond to her husband respectfully.

What is she to respect? This is going back to another example of marriage counseling. I shared this with a couple and I said to her, I was sharing their calling and in their marriage. And I said, and your responsibility to him is to respect him. She goes, that's a problem. And I said, okay, would you like to elaborate? Yeah, I don't respect him.

Oh, that's not what the Bible said. Just as he's called to love you, even if he doesn't feel the love, you are called to respect him regardless of how you may feel about him personally, or whether you think he deserves that respect.

What is a woman to respect? She's to respect the Lord. It is God who calls the man into the position of headship and leadership in the home, not the man. He did not take that upon himself. Most men don't want it. I'm telling you honestly, most men feel ill equipped to be leaders in the home and they don't particularly like the job. But if they're a believer and they're in the word, they understand that they're called to it regardless.

But once again, it was God who put him in that situation, ladies, he did not take that upon himself. When you respect the position that God has given to him, in that position of headship and leadership, you are respecting the Lord who bestowed that position. And it too, in your life, comes down to an act of obedience to Jesus.

You see in a marriage relationship, this is one of the reasons why when I get asked and I don't get asked all that much anymore to do marriage counseling, to be completely honest with you. But when I do get asked, I will not counsel a couple where they are not two committed Christians. I just, I won't do it. Because the basis of the restoration of marriage is not predicated on your love and respect for one another, it's predicated upon your obedience and your love for Jesus Christ. Each individually.

Wife, do you love Jesus enough to obey him when it comes to your relationship to your husband? Husband, do you love Jesus enough to obey Him as it relates to your relationship to your wife? That's what it comes down to. It's an obedience issue.

I've harped on this from the pulpit for years, that when people come to me and say they need marriage counseling, I tell them straight out, you don't need marriage counseling. You need to walk in obedience to God's Word.

Now, if you're having trouble finding out how to do that, I'm more than happy to sit down with you. But I can't make things better for a married couple if they're not willing to obey Jesus and His Word. There's nothing I can do. I can't make it better, so, it really comes down to your personal walk with Jesus Christ.

If your walk with Jesus Christ and your spouse's walk with Jesus Christ is good and strong, your marriage will survive. You'll work through things. You'll deal with issues. If one of you has fallen off in their relationship with Jesus, it's hard to say how things are going to go. But, when two people are committed first and foremost to Jesus Christ, that makes an enormous difference in the marriage relationship.

Once again, when I say to a woman, God calls you to respect your husband. You're going to process that through your woman brain, and that may not match up to what your husband sees or hears in terms of how you communicate and show respect to him in the home and so forth. There's a lot of things that that we can do, as you already know, those of you that have been married for any time at all, there's a lot of things, that we can do to mess up on our calling.

There are things that I can do or say that communicate to my wife the very opposite of what I'm called to communicate to her. I'm told to show her love, but I can say or do things all day long that communicate the opposite of that. And she can do the same. So what are we going to do when that happens? How are we going to deal with that? How are we going to respond to situations like that?

Well, what I want to give you here is some tips on how to go about that. Because it's a foregone conclusion that you're going to violate your calling. If you've been married any time at all, you've already done it many times.

But I've learned something important about marriage. It's not how many times we mess up, it's how we deal with our mess ups. It's how we deal with our blunders. It's how we resolve those things that really is going to make a difference on how your marriage goes from that point forward. Because there are so many couples, and you got to know this, there are so many couples that knowingly or unknowingly violate their calling one to another, his to love, hers to respect. And it goes on and on, and they never come to a place of resolution. They never work it out. They never talk about it. They never deal with it. They just bury it and try to move on. And it doesn't work.

All that pain and all that resentment just goes underground. And it comes up in the craziest and strangest of places when you least expect it. And you've got to deal with it. You've got to deal with it in the grace and power of God. And so, I'm going to share some things here that I believe are key to resolving offenses.

And we're going to call them offenses because that's technically what they are. But you and I, we both know that these are violations of your ministry. All right.

So, guys, you've done something that communicated that to your wife. I don't love you, or I don't really care about your feelings. And wives, perhaps you've done or said something that communicated some attitude of disrespect toward your husband. What are you going to do? How are you going to respond to these things? Number 1.

- *Wait for the emotions to settle down before bringing it up*

Wait for the emotions to settle down before bringing it up.

I can tell you after being married for 45 years, that Sue and I have never once had a productive conversation when emotions were running high. You have to get to the point where you care more about your marriage than you care about venting your feelings. Let me say that again. You have to get to the point where you care more about your marriage than you do about venting your feelings because venting is something that can become habitual in our lives.

When we get angry, we pop off, we punch a hole in a door or throw something or say something, or out comes this vulgar word or whatever. And then in our

marriage situation, somebody does something to offend us and we immediately begin to bring it up while emotions are at the, their highest. And that is never going to go well.

And if you have children in the home, I strongly encourage you not to discuss your personal private matters related to some offense or disagreement around the kids, especially when emotions are running high. They just don't need to hear that. They don't need to experience mom and dad with their horns locked. You, you are the stability of their lives so be stable around them, show them that stability, wait for the emotions to die down.

Listen, if you have to, if you have to walk out the door and say, I'm going to take a walk around the block, or I'm going to go down to the property line here always. And you got to do that.

I've met some couples where one or the other is so desirous to resolve the issue that they won't let the other person walk away when the emotions are running high. Sometimes I've heard this. It's usually women, but not always. And there's something going on. And the man just says, I got to, I just got to go for a walk. And the woman will say, no, stay, please.

Because she's relational. She wants to resolve this thing. Ladies, or even guys, you've got to let there be a cool down period. You're not going to have any good conversation until you do. Until you are both calm and able to speak rationally to one another. And the other thing about talking when the emotions are high, we all know that it can take just a second to, in the height of emotion, say something incredibly hurtful that can take literally years to heal.

I mean, 5 seconds to say something to hurt them that could take years to get over. Just don't go there. Be smart about your emotions. If someone has hurt you, if someone has offended you, I'm talking to you about your spouse, you need to be able to have an agreement between the two of you. Timeout, I'm going to go for a walk. You go that way, I'm going this way, I'll come back when I'm calm. Vitally important. Number 2, the next one is also important,

- *Speak in private*

Speak in private.

Don't bring it up in front of friends and family. Because these things are sometimes going to happen in front of others, whether you're at a family get-together and he makes some crack about your cooking, or you make some crack

ladies about something, some of, one of his weaknesses or whatever, that he didn't want necessarily revealed to the world. And he feels disrespected. You feel unloved.

The temptation is to go excuse me, sort of a thing. And I've seen it happen. And we've all been made uncomfortable in a room full of people where two people are bickering because they haven't learned to number one, let the emotions die down and to go off and talk about it in private.

But this is so important. And again, I want to encourage those of you that have children at home, to talk about these issues, these offenses in private. Talk about it go into your bedroom, go for a drive. If your kids are old enough to be on their own, go for a drive, go for a walk. Talk about it together. When you're calm, alone.

Nobody needs to be dragged into this conversation. It's between the two of you.

Now, I want you to remember your calling for the next point, because remember that you're calling men. You are called to love your wife. Wives, you are called to respect your husband.

- *Share lovingly (him) or respectfully (her)*

When you share about the offense, the husband is to do it lovingly and the wife is to do it respectfully.

In other words, just because your spouse violated their ministry calling and offended you, that doesn't give you a get out of jail free card to rip them a new one just because they hurt your feelings.

In other words, ladies, if your husband was unloving in something he did or said, that doesn't mean you have the right now to be disrespectful. And the same thing, husbands, if your wife was disrespectful, that doesn't give you a free pass to be unloving in the way you communicate the offense. Share lovingly and respectfully according to your calling.

That means you're not going to raise your voice, you're not going to be mean, you're not going to berate. You're just going to communicate.

Number 4.

- *Express the offense briefly and be done*

Express the offense briefly and be done.

This is very important. Let me give you an example of how long this ought to take. You can start your mental stopwatch. Honey, when we were hanging out with our friends last night and you started talking about my fear of heights. I, and everybody in the room was laughing. I just, I got to tell you, I just didn't really feel respected by you when that happened. How long did that take? Was that 15, 10 or 15 seconds? It doesn't take long to communicate what happened.

What often happens when we begin to express an offense or something that has offended us, is that the emotions begin to rise up again as we're talking about it and we repeat it and we go on and on. And we might start off okay and say, honey, I just want you to know that when you did that or when you said that I just didn't feel very loved when you said that. And in fact, quite the opposite.

And he nods his head. And then she says, and you do this a lot. And then she goes on to say, I don't know if you remember, but last month when we were out with my parents, remember when you said, (da da da da)...? And this has been an ongoing thing with you!

Do you see what's going on? It's like I'm taking that rubber hose and I'm just going to beat the person with it until they can't get up anymore. There's no chance of recovery because I kept going and I kept going and I kept going. Listen, if you take more than 10 or 15 seconds to explain how you got offended or what that your spouse did to offend you, you've taken too long.

You've got to give your spouse the opportunity to rise up from the ashes of what has happened and respond. But if you go on and on, you will beat them down into the dust and there's no recovery. They just, they want to just slither away. They're like, there's no fixing this, I guess.

We come together to talk about it in order to get it right, not to make the other person feel bad. But see, if we're going to be honest, that's what's really in our hearts. You hurt me. I'd like you to feel a little bit of what I felt.

But that is really the height of selfishness to try to hurt you back. That's childishness. And so, express the offense briefly, as briefly as you can and be done with it.

Men, I want to pause here for just a moment before I go to the next point because we men and I'm telling on us. I'll admit that.

We men have this, I'll call it a negative tendency to hear what our wives are saying, but not really hear what's going on under the surface to hear. We have a hard time sometimes hearing the heart of what our wives are saying. And when she tells us something, we tend to process it once again, through our man brain.

And we have a little ticker tape in there that's going on and processing, what we're hearing. And if we decide that it's not really legit, we kick it back and we say, oh that's stupid. And sometimes that actually comes out of our mouths. That's dumb. What's your problem anyway? I think you just need to get over things, honey. I think you just need to not be so sensitive all the time. Big mistake. Yeah.

Guys, particularly when we're listening to our wife express her feelings, it doesn't matter whether you think it's legitimate or not, she does. That's enough. You are to love her sacrificially.

And that means you don't kick it back and say, that's not important enough for me to even consider. You listen, you hear her out. And you respond to her perception because many times I have found, I could be wrong. Many times I have found that it is my wife's perception of a situation that she's really dealing with. She'll talk to me using these words over here, but what's going on is down here and it's deeper and it's underground somewhere.

And sometimes I have to dig a little bit to get to what's really going on. And so, I have to learn as a man to listen to how she perceives a situation, not how I perceive it or not whether I think her complaint or concern is legitimate. And that's hard because I'm a man. And most of us are idiots for the most part, but we're learning. We're growing. We're learning to anticipate. Here's the deal. I learned at one particular point, I'm never going to think like my wife. I'm just not.

And frankly, she's never going to think like me. Even though, I have found, most married couples get married and spend the majority of their married life trying to get the other person to think like them, and to respond like them and

when they don't, we get upset, and we get exasperated. And we're like, what's wrong with you?

Well there's nothing wrong. He's a man, she's a woman. And we think very differently. We respond to life very differently. It's the way God made us. And if we would just stop trying to change the other person and try to get them to think like we think, you remember that song from My Fair Lady? Why can't a woman be more like a man?

You guys, it was back in the sixties. Some of you, if you're not, if you're not into classic movies or you don't have gray hair like mine, you might not know it, but it's a great song. These two old bachelors are singing this song. It's a musical. Why can't a woman be more like a man? That's exactly what men want, to a degree anyway. Here we are. So the offense has been expressed.

Okay. So the next point, number 5 on the list is to,

- *Ask for / Extend forgiveness*

Ask for (extend) forgiveness.

If that is, if you are the one who did the offending, even if you don't feel like what you did was offensive.

Remember guys, it's not up to you to decide whether or not it was a legitimate issue in her heart because she considered it a legitimate issue and that was enough. So look at your wife. Take her by the hands, look in her eyes and say, honey, I'm sorry. Would you forgive me? And it's important to say those words.

Do you understand that? Forgiveness? I mean, as Christians, you guys know how critical forgiveness is. You say those words in the world where people are not used to them, that makes them very uncomfortable. You walk up to an unbeliever and say, hey, would you forgive me? They're, yeah, whatever. They brush it off. It's okay. Don't worry about it.

I remember my daughter even doing this, my oldest daughter. I came home one evening and she was out in the family room and we were talking and I did something, I snapped at her and she immediately just turned around and went into her room and shut the door.

And of course, immediately I'm thinking. I'm the biggest heel on the face of the earth. Here we go. Tap, tap, tap... Can I come in? I go into her bedroom, honey, I am so sorry. I shouldn't have snapped at you. Would you forgive me?

Now we taught our kids when they were little to say, will you forgive me? And, I forgive you, but it's funny how they forget that stuff. And she was a teenager at this time. And she said to me, she goes, it's okay.

And I said, honey, it's not okay. If it was okay, I wouldn't have had to come in here and ask for forgiveness. So don't say, it's okay.

That steals that forgiveness from them. They asked you for forgiveness, and that's an important step in restoration. But the other step is just as important. Extend forgiveness. We need to learn to say, I forgive you.

Now, even though our kids, when our kids were little, it was almost comical. one of them would hit one of the other or take something from them. And they, they yell and scream for a while and we get them together and we talk about it.

We say, did you hit your sister? Yeah, I did. With that little wooden hammer? Yeah, right on the head. Okay. Tell your sister that you're sorry. I'm sorry, and would you forgive me?

And it always was funny to hear him say, they say, would you forgive me? And then she goes, I forgive you. And you can see they're just seething, they want to kill each other. But we're just going through the motions of getting them to understand that these words are important.

And as a married couple, I want to communicate that to you as well. The words are important. The heart behind it is important.

Would you forgive me? I'm really sorry. I forgive you. I forgive you. Oh, those are great words, but they carry with them. Wait, they carry with them an assumption. And the assumption is our 6th and final point.

- *Don't bring it up again*

And that is that you're not going to bring it up again.

This is so important. When your spouse comes to you and you've expressed an offense and they've responded by saying, you're right. I shouldn't have done

that. I shouldn't have said that. Please forgive me. And you said, I forgive you. It's done. It is off limits from bringing that up ever again. I want to remind you of something that is written in the Book of Corinthians. Let me show you this, where the apostle Paul is talking about real love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (NIV84)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

(He starts defining real) *Love*... (things like) *patient*, (patience) *love* (kindness) *is kind*. (he says,) *It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered*, (look at this last thing) *it keeps no record of wrongs*.

It doesn't keep a record. It isn't just holding those things back for later on to bring it out, shape it into a club, and I can beat you over the head with it. But that's sometimes what we do.

You have a ministry. Your ministry before God, husbands, love your wives, wives, respect your husbands. Share with one another. And this is what I want to tell you to go home and do.

I want you to go home and I want you to share with one another how you can fulfill that area of ministry. How your spouse, now, when you talk to each other about how they can do it, don't say I'll tell you one thing. Don't do this. No, that's not what I'm asking you to do.

I'm not telling you to tell them what not to do. I'm telling you to give them positive communication on what they can do. Okay? Very important. And communicate what it is that will fulfill that ministry between the two of you.