

Dancing Together: Step Two, The Man's Part

Genesis 3:16-19, Eph 5:25-30

INTRODUCTION

What if there were random places on the dancefloor where fire would burst out if you stepped there? And, what if, in unexpected moments, when you came too close to the walls, wild animals reached out their sharp claws to get you? And, what if your enemy shot cooking oil at your feet to make you slip?

It would be very hard to dance. The person leading the dance would have a much harder job than just knowing the steps. The person who followed the lead would have to trust the leader, even though she wondered if he even knew what he was doing.

For Adam and Eve, the dance of marriage went from being easy and breezy to being like this. Since then, the dance of man and woman in marriage remains very tricky.

Today, we want to look at the task of the husband. (Next week, we will look at the role of his dance partner, the wife).

TEXT: GENESIS 3:16-19

16 To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

17 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

We looked at this text last week. We will not spend much time here now. Let's notice just a few things quickly, and then move on.

Brief notes on Genesis 3:16-19

1. The woman the man is to lead will be his chief obstacle.

Verse 16 shows that the woman is going to desire to direct him and even usurp his leadership. "This is a dangerous dance floor! How do I know this clown is going to lead well? I'd better handle this!" Christian men, just because God gives you a wife and tells you that you are to lead her, that doesn't mean that she will follow easily!

2. The man is tasked with producing the wealth the family needs.

The Bible does not prohibit women in the market place, nor does it forbid her from contributing to the provision of the family. Nevertheless, the man is given the primary duty of bringing home the bacon. A man is not a man until he sees himself as responsible for providing for himself, and, if possible, for others. Till then, he is still a boy, no matter how old.

3. The world will always fight against the man's efforts.

The picture here is of the earth only yielding what the man wants by his pain. We live in a world of obstacles, of difficulty.

Looking at Genesis, we get a little bit of the picture of the challenges a man has in leading other people through this life, as he must in marriage and family.

But there is one other obstacle in his way, and this one is the greatest of all:

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (Jam 1:14-15 ESV)

Man's biggest problem is his own evil desires. He, like his father, Adam, is a sinner. He is tasked with being responsible and leading well, but all the time, he is tempted to throw in the towel, leave the dance floor, and steal, cheat, and indulge his senses in sin.

At this point, we must remind all the men (and women) here that the first step for any man who seeks to please God is that he repent of his sins, and receive Jesus into his life. Jesus, who died on the Cross for his sins and rose from the dead, is the only One who can free him from his own inner demons and his own sinful desires. Jesus is the only One who can lead him every day, and help him live a good life. Apart from Jesus, every man will die in his sins and spend eternity as a failure, in Hell. Step one in the dance? Receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. Have you taken the first step?

The Steps Given By God:

Assuming that every man who wants to live for Jesus also wants to fulfill his duty as a good man and a good husband, let's look at the instructions given to him by God in Ephesians, chapter 5:

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. (Eph 5:25-30 ESV)

The Steps of a Husband

1. Love her as Christ loved the church.

The authority God gives the man in marriage is to be an imitation of the way Jesus loves and leads His church. How does He do that? The focus of this passage is on His active service of her. He meets her needs. He doesn't condemn her for her sins, but cleanses her. He leads as a humble servant, putting her first in all things.

There are different kinds of authority. What many women, I would guess, would naturally fear when told that they are to submit to a husband, is that he has just been given license to misuse her, ignore her, belittle her, treat her like a child, or even like a slave.

The type of authority we exercise depends on the relationship, doesn't it? If I were a slave, the authority of my owner is complete—he owns me. If I am a student, the authority of the teacher is limited to a certain time, a certain place, and to only certain tasks related to the subject being taught. If I am an employee, then the boss has authority over me only in relation to the business he runs or the contract I signed. If I am a citizen, then the mayor has authority over me only as is outlined by public law. If I am a child, then a parent only has the authority within the context of nurturing me for 18 years. Well, what about a husband and a wife? What authority does a husband have?

The answer might surprise many people: The authority a husband has over a wife is whatever authority she wants to give him, no more. As in a dance, the man can only lead as much as his partner is willing to follow. If she refuses, and seeks to fight his leadership, they will stumble all over the floor.

Someone here might ask, "Why would a woman then, submit to a man's authority, if she doesn't have to?" Because she loves him. This is how Jesus leads us. He doesn't love us when we are obedient, but when we were still sinners, He died for us. And once He saves us, He keeps us, even if we fail Him. That is called "grace." Many people then ask, "Well, why would we obey Jesus if we don't have to in order to earn Heaven?" The answer is becomes He loves us so much, and we want to love Him back. Our submission to Jesus is 100% voluntary and uncoerced. The same is true for a wife. A husband may not push, control, coerce, force, abuse, belittle, misuse, call her names, hit, insult, or in any way demean his wife. He may not treat her like a student, like a child, like a slave, nor like an employee. She is a part of him, and he must lead her with tenderness, kindness, and grace, whether she follows or not. That is how Christ loves the church.

To quote C. S. Lewis:

"The husband is the head of the wife just in so far as he is to her what Christ is to the Church. He is to love her as Christ loved the Church—read on—and give his life for her. This headship, then, is most fully embodied not in the husband we should all wish to be but in him 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. For the Church has no beauty but what the Bridegroom gives her; he does not find, but makes her, lovely." —C. S. Lewis

2. Make her beautiful.

Any casual observer of the human race can tell you that women value beauty, seek to be as lovely as possible, and admire beauty in one another. As much as it depends on you, husband, you are to make her beautiful and make her feel beautiful:

27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Now, you are not Jesus, so you cannot take away her sins, but viewing her as beautiful is your job. This doesn't come by criticizing or advising, but by adoring her, and letting her know regularly how beautiful she is to you. Every woman has beauty about her. Her husband's job is to focus on it, promote it, and to love her. You make her feel important, valued, loved, and wonderful.

If she is a Christian woman, then you have it made, for this body only holds beauty for so long, in its present state. But the woman with inner beauty of God will shine like the sun forever. If you could see her now as she will be then, you would define beauty only by her. Never stop being her boyfriend. Never stop being the one who sees that she is special. That is your job.

Now, for those so immature that they cannot see the beauty of their own wife, it is time to grow up. That leads us to our next step:

3. Love her as if she is your own body.

Look in a mirror, husband. Physically, you are fading. Inside the body, where it counts, you have plenty of flaws. But you remember your good points physically, either now or in the past, and you prefer to focus on the good God is doing in you instead of the evil you have done in the past. In other words, you see yourself as valuable, as the good guy, as worth caring for. Good. Now extend the same grace to your wife, every day:

28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

She is you. You are one.

4. Remember that a man who hates his wife hates himself.

Whenever you find yourself at odds with your wife, not adoring her, not feeling kind and gracious towards her, remember that you are only hating and abusing yourself. This truth is the same as the one above, stated in the negative.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it

Be gentle, good, and kind to your wife. Otherwise, it is yourself you hate.

5. Worship Jesus because of how He loves you.

Finally, lead your wife in worship. Many times I have received this question from a husband who wanted to lead his wife well: "How can I be the spiritual leader when I feel she is ahead of me on this issue?"

Who ever said that leadership meant you had to know more, or be better at things than the ones you lead? Leadership is about direction. She may know the Bible better. She may have

been a Christian longer. But there is one thing you should compete with her on: Passion for Jesus. You have the power to be 100% for Jesus, or less than 100%. Choose to be 100%, all in. If your wife knows more Bible than you, then you are a blessed man, for she will be a great help to you. But don't let her down by not leading her in passion for Jesus.

What motivates us to lead like this? The way Jesus loves us:

*29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,
30 because we are members of his body*

Husband, He willingly connects Himself to you –your life to His. He has a stake in you because He has made you a part of Himself. He is fully committed to you, no matter how weak you have been, nor how you have failed in the past. Respond to that kindness with worship. He has connected His fortunes to yours –so bow your knee to Him, give Him your life –100% of what you are and what you have. Give Him all your passion. You do this, and your life will never lack a direction or a light. You do this, and your wife will understand the kindness of God in giving you to her as a husband.