



Love Incorruptible
#11 The Church, Part Three
July 9, 2017
Courage Church, Detroit, MI

We have come to one of the most famous passages in the entire bible...

and before I read it, I want to say this to you:

First of all, there is literally no way to do this passage justice in one sitting. There

is so much here... we could easily spend a month on it, if not longer... I say that because THERE WILL BE things left unmentioned by the end of this... there just has to be due to time... I am hoping to hit on as much if it as I can today.

I think that God is really cool, the things that this passage unlocks reveals *that* in so many ways... and today is going to be a lot to follow but I really believe it will bless you.

and my prayer is that you will, in the end be able to see just how powerful the church of Jesus Christ is... and hopefully, you gain a better understanding of marriage as well.

because it is one of the goto passages dealing with marriages, but really, its a whole lot bigger than that.

Paul says, essentially, that the entire concept of marriage is one living, real life, tangible metaphor, for the church, and its relationship to its savior, its husband, its soon coming King... its head.

Lets dive in head first.

Ephesians 5:22-33

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

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. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Let's Pray.

This is a passage that Pastors typically tread incredibly lightly on.

If you really want to stir the pot, you say “wives, submit to your husbands, because the husband is the head of you.”

That is a great way to alienate people... and to push them away... in our culture, its a no-go... this is one of those verses that makes people think Christians are just so out of touch with society... it make people say “its things LIKE THIS that make Christians Bigots - sexists... - power hungry, male dominating psychopaths”

(I have a lot of friends who are rather critical of this type of thinking, so I hear it a lot)

and the honest truth is, *a false understanding* of what Paul is saying here *has caused* many Christians throughout time to be part of the problem that has only fueled people’s anger toward the church, and caused all sorts of misconceptions about Jesus and His church...

so in *recent* years, what we have, ON THE OTHER SIDE, done to try and make up for *that*, is we have tried to suppress the roles of the husband and the wife as laid out in the bible because we don't think that it fits properly with our culture.

So the cultural norms have dictated our application of the Word of God.

but let me start by proposing this question before we dive in... and please stay with me for this...

Have we ever, at least in the last few hundred years... experienced a time where marriage and the family was in worse shape than it is right now?

when you look at the Fatherlessness... and you look at the broken homes, and the absurdly low average of marriages that actually succeed and couples who actually are actually *happy*...

I can't help but wonder *if perhaps* our society will one day be a case study of WHAT **NOT TO DO** in the family...

and yet we shutter when we read what Paul says here, saying it is oppressive, and harmful... as if the 2017 American way is working better.

and I hope that this blesses you today and helps you understand a little more clearly... but the mountaintop moment of this entire passage is the (second to) last verse... understanding this last verse will change the way that you view marriage, and the church, forever.

It (verse 32) says:

This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

This is one of the most bizarre things you will read in the entire bible... Because what happens is, we are reading this, and we are like... okay... this is marriage advice... there is some good stuff in here... some of it is

hard to swallow, but most of it is really good... this is how our relationships should look...

wait... what? is this even about marriage? now Paul says he is talking about the church...

But the truth is, if you are ever going to understand the depth to which is the relationship between Christ and the Church, you have to understand marriage... whether you are married, or not. Paul says it is beyond comprehension... it is a mystery...

well, what is the mystery?

its quite the mystery!

Lets look at verses 28-31 - remember, before this, Paul says wives, submit to your husbands... they are the head... respect them. We will talk about that too.. but then he turns to husbands:

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. **“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”**

This idea is big enough when you are just dealing with marriage... The idea of **two becoming one**...

Its *even bigger* when you are dealing with what marriage points *too*.

So what Paul does, is he takes us all the way back to the beginning. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 - Jesus also quotes Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19, when He is answering a question about divorce, and there He says “what God has joined together, therefore, let not man separate.”

Both Jesus and Paul take us back to Genesis... the Hebrew Old Testament... And really, we can get all we ever need to know *about marriage*, from Genesis 2 and 3...

It is Ephesians that tells us “okay... now, TAKE EVERYTHING you know about marriage... everything from Genesis 2, and apply it to the church... because ultimately, that's its purpose... its an analogy... a flesh and blood example of the church and its relationship to Jesus Christ.

but When you try and understand the roles of men and women in a marriage, if you read Ephesians 5 without Genesis 2 and 3, it can feel very oppressive toward women.

In the garden, Man is given a very specific job... that job is to “name” everything. (Gen. 2:19-20) - it says that God formed every living thing, then he brought it to the man, to see what the man would name it. And whatever man named it, that was what it became.

When we name our kids, *we have learned* to look up the meanings of their names, and have become intentional with it... like our daughter Brooklyn Jain.... Jain means “God is gracious” and Brooklyn means “Broken Land” - Dawn and I have always felt called to particularly broken places, and what was in our hearts when we named her that was:

“God is gracious in this broken land.”

That she would *bring grace* to this broken land.

Names were incredibly significant in the Bible... when you gave someone a name, you were *defining* them, to a degree... You were saying “This is what I want for you. This is your calling.”

What it was, was structure. It was order. The bible says that in beginning, God brought *order out of chaos*. and then he gave Adam THAT VERY PURPOSE... “take things that have no name... with no direction... and *direct them* somewhere.

Now... lets take a common concept... the idea of the man being the Spiritual authority in the home... but apply to it the specific gifting that God actually gave to the man... the role of “naming.”

so take the word authority.

A towering word indicating that one lords over another.

Paul says “the man is the head of the woman.” JUST AS Christ is the head of the church, which Paul says, is his body. the head *indicates authority*.

so we read this oppressively... like MAN IS SUPPOSED TO RULE OVER WOMAN.

That isn't what it is saying.

do you know where the word authority originally comes from? We don't use it this way anymore, even a little...

but look closely at the word: authority. What other word sticks out?

Author.

I am a songwriter... I have written many songs... And you could hear any one of those songs, and you could resonate with it, and it could take you back to a place in your life that makes you think it is about *you*...

but if you want to really know *what the song is about*, you need to ask me. Because I wrote it with a plan and something specific in my mind. I had a real life experience that I drew from when writing those words. and I had intention when I created that, in the same way that people are intentional when NAMING their children... there is a certain level of authorship there... a certain tone you are setting...

but we have since let the word turn into something different... now we view authority as “the power to give orders.” - because like everything, we have distorted the gifts that God has given us... so often now, authority is used in such a way that “I can get what I want out of you.” but think of Jesus... who the bible says has been given ALL authority on heaven AND on earth... (Matthew 28:20)

Hebrews 12:2 is one of my favorite verses in the bible... it says: "look to Jesus, who is the AUTHOR and FINISHER of our faith..." with intention, He is writing a story, and we get to be a part of it... BUT THEN it says: "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Think about that... Paul says in Ephesians 5: "men, this is how you fill the role of "the head" - be ready to give up your lives for your wives, just as Christ laid down his life for the church..."

everything about spiritual authority has to do with taking the bottom position... it has to do with sacrifice. It does not include Lording over someone else.

And in the home, it means you are the one who makes sure you ALL have an encounter with Jesus... you sacrifice your own *desires* and the things that you want FOR YOU, to make sure that that is the story in your family. Husband's, Father's - that is your job.

To give it a name...
to set a tone.

To lead your family deeper into a relationship with Jesus THROUGH SACRIFICE. Biblically, yes, you are the final word when there ABSOLUTELY needs to be a final word... but as you will see in a minute, when things are functioning as they should, the conclusions are usually mutual.

But husbands, your job is to set the tone.

now, that doesn't mean that the wife is not allowed to do that too... just like when it says "husbands love you wives, wives respect your husbands" that doesn't mean that both shouldn't do both. But there are specific gifts and callings on all of us. I am a teacher... that doesn't mean that a person with the gift of prophecy will never teach... it is just not their main focus. But if the prophet starts teaching and doesn't prophecy anymore, when what we needed in the body was a prophet... there would be a gap. A void.

That is important. Husbands, that IS YOUR JOB. and if you aren't doing the job that you are responsible for, it will lead a void.

Spiritual Authority... if you even want to use that word... is not Lordship, it is *authorship*. It is knowing the source of the story, because you were intentional to create it. You have the authority because you were there when it happened. You helped create the experience.

and our example of authorship is Jesus, who wrote our faith by losing himself, which is crucial.

So it says: the man is the head. and then it says that "Jesus is the head."

as we have learned previously in this series... Jesus built his church, so that He would have a body to put his head on.

but think about this:

its all an analogy... Christ is the head... the Church is the body. the husband is the head... which makes the wife *the body*. Not something being *walked on*... IT IS SOMETHING YOU CAN'T WALK WITHOUT! something just as important in the mission.

but what happens if the head and body are out of sync?

What if a head wants to go one direction, and the body wants to go another direction? It can't. You would be stuck.

and what good is a head without a body? its useless.

So in Genesis, God sees a head, without a body. He sees the man... and he realizes... man is all alone. There is no story here. This is boring. This isn't going to change anybody.

So we read that *out of man*, God created woman. Because God saw man, and He was all alone, and God said "its not good that man should be alone" - so he created woman, as a "helper" (Gen. 2:18)

Now, through our western eyes, we see the word “*helper*” and again, we push it away because we think it is saying that the wife should wear the apron, cook all the food, do all the laundry... raise the kids... do all of the things that ALLOW the man to continue doing whatever he wants to do. She stays at home, so he can work.

We think of the word “assistant.” - something we don’t *need*... but its nice to have.

Which of course, leads us to reading the first line of Paul's marriage passage... “wives, submit to your husbands” as meaning the same thing... wives... do whatever your husband says no matter what, and do whatever it takes to make it so he can live however he wants.

But that is NOT what Genesis is saying, and that is NOT what Paul is saying.

In fact, ALMOST every time in the Old Testament that you get this word “helper” (which is the Hebrew word *ezer* (a-zair) - it is talking about how **God is our helper**... So unless you view God as the one who is responsible for doing your laundry, raising your kids, and cooking all your meals, then you understand, the wife is NOT the *servant* to the husband. She may do those things, but **he also** may do those things.

Psalm 70:5 is a great example... it says “I am poor and I am needy... But GOD IS MY HELP, and my deliverer” it is saying that God will fill the voids in my life where I fall short... I am poor... I can’t figure it out on my own... but all of the things that I AM NOT... HE IS. That is what *ezer* (a-zair) is.

It is actually a picture of the gospel! Of how Jesus meets you, as you are, where you are... and as His Spirit fills you, you start to become something new... and you start to live in what he has done for you.

Hosea 13:9 words it it like this in the King James, I love this:

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help (KJV)

I feel like I could read this about myself sometimes: O Jacob, thou hast destroyed thyself. but in Christ is thine help!"

On your own, Israel... BY YOURSELF... everything fell apart... but when God comes alongside of you... suddenly, hope is restored.

The point of the wife being a "helper" IS that THERE IS SOMETHING MISSING from man... and she is that missing piece. There is something that is supposed to be accomplished... but man can't do it alone!

So men, when you find her... what you will do is: you will leave your Father and Mother... you will leave the comfort of the life that you have always known, where someone *else* took care of you, and made sure your needs are met... you will leave *that* life, and start a new life... where YOU are the one responsible for making sure that *her* needs are met...

You will leave what you knew, and start a brand new life... and the two of you will become one.

Genesis 2:24 IS THE DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE:

"Therefore a **man** shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his **wife**, and they shall become **one flesh**"

There are FOUR key Hebrew words that the writer of Genesis uses that we need to understand...

It says the man, which is the Hebrew word "*ish*" will leave his Father and Mother and join with his wife... which is the Hebrew word "*ishah*" and the two will become one... one is "*echad*" and then the word flesh is the word "*basar*" (bah-sar)

So the "*ish*" will leave his Father and Mother and join with his "*ishah*" and the two shall be *echad basar* (bah-sar).

echad basar is what you become when you get married.

Basar is - Flesh - this word is not just limited to skin and bones, what this is saying is that two different people become one new person.

The prophet Joel says “I will pour out my Spirit on ALL FLESH” - as in... all people. He is not pouring it out on all peoples skin... He is pouring it on PEOPLE.

WHAT A BIG CONCEPT. It is indescribable. Paul calls it a mystery.

We are going to try and make as much sense of it as we can... but it is truly a concept that is bigger than any human could ever fully comprehend.

but the word that should really blow you away is the word “one.”

when he says “the two become one” - what he says is that two individuals...

two different people... with different backgrounds, and upbringings... whose worldview's were shaped by *different* things... who have formed DIFFERENT habits through the different ways that they have lived LEADING UP TO THIS MOMENT... then SUDDENLY they are joined together in marriage and from this day forward EVERYTHING WILL BE DIFFERENT...

two singular, individual people become *echad*.

That is the Hebrew word used for “one” - it is *echad*.

Echad is one of the most fascinating Hebrew words you will ever see...

and in order to fully understand it, you need to look to another very famous verse found in Deuteronomy 6... This is called the “SHEMA” - many practicing Jews wake up every morning and they quote this verse...

Jesus quotes *part of it* when he gives us the Great commandment, but it says this: (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Hear, O Israel: The **Lord** our **God**, the Lord is **one**. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

There are several names for “God” in the Old Testament, and you get a couple of them here.

The Lord - Yahwey -Yĕhovah (Yhwy)
Our God - *elohiym*

'elohiym is the *plural* word for God...

and it is also the **FIRST** word for God used in the entire bible.

In the beginning, a *plural* God created the heavens and the earth.

You get more backing a little further down in the creation story, in Genesis 1:26 when God says “let **US** create man in **OUR** image” and then He describes making two *distinct* creatures... male, and female.

so The plural God, in “our” image (in the image of plural God), created two different creatures.

And throughout the bible, male and female roles and places **ARE NEVER THE SAME...** they are **ALWAYS DISTINCT**. They are equal, they are 100% equal... but they are different. We have to understand this... because the gospel is equal... it levels all playing fields... In Christ, we aren't male or female...

we are equal... but we are different! The woman completes the man. They complete each other.

The power of a male and a female **ALWAYS** rests in what happens **WHEN THEY COME TOGETHER**.

Because when they come **TOGETHER...** *that is* when they fully bare the image of God in the greatest way possible... the image that Genesis describes God as saying “**OUR IMAGE.**”

a plural God.

but here in Deuteronomy, we read that this PLURAL GOD, is *one*.

The Lord is *echad*.

One way I have heard the word "*echad*" described is "it is unity in the midst of diversity." OR Diversity uniting, or compound unity. Differences colliding and creating something that on their own... neither would be!

Or perhaps a better way to say it is this:

"their differences are what *complete* them."

So even though the Holy Spirit manifested himself in a new and miraculous way on everyone in the book of Acts... and Jesus didn't come in the flesh until the New Testament... from the beginning, the Lord... was *plural*... yet one. They were ALL THERE... He has always been the community, that we call "The Trinity." God is: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

I know that this is a lot, but hang with me... Because in John 17, we get this prayer that Jesus prays to his Father. And it is a fascinating prayer... but there is no way to really understand this prayer, without understanding the SHEMA... without understanding "Hear oh Israel the Lord our God, the Lord is *echad*" -

He is *more* than one... but He is one.

and it is pretty hard to understand "*echad*" without understanding marriage.

So John 17... Jesus is praying for the church. and this is what He says: (I ask...)

"that they may all be **one**, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be *in us*, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

What Jesus is saying is that he lives in community with God. and the only way that the church will ever point the world to Jesus, is if they first are in community with each other.

You have heard it said this way... people will know my disciples by their LOVE one for another... (John 13:35)

Yes, we don't all look the same, act the same, or like the same things... but that is what makes us *echad*. When we come together IN CHRIST, it is our differences that unite us! Because God showered the same grace on all of us, right where we were.

Jesus met me in a very different place than he perhaps met you... but he brought us all to the same place. No matter where we started, we all landed TOGETHER.

Remember when we talked about the church a few weeks ago? And about how there are some things that I can do that maybe some of you can't do as well... but there are definitely lots of other things that you guys can do that I have no idea how to do!!! That is what makes us a body. We are different. We play different roles, and serve different functions. And yes, we may have "talent" on our own... you can be a good guitar player on your own... but get in a band... and see the way different instruments compliment each other and how harmonies bring out melodies.... It is many musicians... but its ONE SONG. because when you are contributing to the body, God can use that talent in a much more powerful way. Because his plan for your life IS community. It is the fact that we can do more, when we do it together.

and that is *echad*. That is unity in the midst of diversity.

"A **man** shall leave his Father and Mother, and be joined to his **wife**, and the two shall become *echad*."

Now, watch this:

In Hebrew, the word for husband (or "man") is "*ish* איש" it is made up of the letters: *aleph*, *yod*, and *shin*.

ok... now:

In Hebrew, the word for wife (or “woman”) is “*ishah* אִשָּׁה” - it is made up of the letters *aleph*, *shin*, and *hey*.

If you look at these two words carefully, you notice that Two of the letters are identical, and only one letter in each word is different.

Which isn’t that surprising, since in English, man and woman are similar words, and of course, we know that when God created woman, he created her FROM MAN.

The first human *words* recorded in history was Adam talking about the the woman saying “bone of my bones! flesh of my flesh! she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” (Gen. 2:23)

He says: she came from me!

So we have two very similar words...

but *in Hebrew*, each word has ONE DISTINCT letter.

and if you remove the letters that are the same, and combine the two distinct letters, (remove yod, from *husband* - or Y in English, and “hey,” from wife... -and you put them together...

יה

you spell, in Hebrew: the word “yah” which is the name of God.

Like I said... God is really cool! Even down to the original language that He gave us, the letters that are distinct in the word man and woman, together, SPELL GOD!!!

and of course, there is so much truth in it...

When the complimentary differences of a Husband and a wife come together, the way it was *intended* to be... God is there. It is a reflection of God.

I can say this with certainty... the times in our marriage when God is central... there is something about Dawn and I that is virtually unstoppable. I have had so many people see it, and call it out in us... when we are complimenting each other in the proper capacity, it feels like there is NOTHING that we can't do. We have accomplished many incredible things together... things that when I look back I can't help but wonder... "how did we do that?" - God was in our midst! He will always do more through us than we can do without him.

and we are able to do SO MUCH MORE TOGETHER, than either of us could have ever done on our own.

But the truth is, we don't always live in that place. We should... but we don't. But WHEN WE ARE... it is like the whole world could fall apart, and because we still have this *echad*, this *oneness*... there is nothing worth even getting worked up over.

when man and woman come together and are living in unity and in harmony, the way that marriage was designed to be... God is in the midst. He is there, and his spirit rests on that relationship because, just like what Jesus says in the prayer in John 17... when people see that the church is one, they will see God... and when other people look to what we have in our marriages, that oneness... they will say: I don't know how they do it... I don't even know WHAT IT IS... but I want it!

In fact, it is the single greatest image of what He is like. The two, both made in distinct, complementary images of God come together to create a beautiful reflection of God...

Now, on the contrary... do you know what happens when you take God out of a marriage? and this is easy to do... because even when areas of your life that *seemingly* have nothing to do with *that* relationship begin to crumble, it is easy to take life out on each other because we are the most

comfortable with each other. But look at how easily this can become destructive.

If you take the Hebrew word for husband, and the Hebrew word for wife, and you remove the two letters that are *distinct*... the letters that, together spell God's name..." and you read the Hebrew words *without God's name in them*... do you know what it says? Aleph, shin. Aleph, shin.

שן שן

It is the same word, two times. It is the word "fire."

Aleph, Shin spells "fire."

so suddenly, when you take the letters forming God's name out, you now have "fire, fire."

Fire. two times.

In Hebrew, how you emphasize something is to double it. There were no exclamation points, so if you wanted to make sure you emphasized how important something is... you would double it.

Fire. Fire. Double Fire. The worst kind of fire, an all consuming fire.

In other words... this. is. as. bad. as. it. gets! Something that was designed to be the absolutely great gift... the absolute best... can become THE ABSOLUTE WORST, MOST DESTRUCTIVE THING IN YOUR LIFE.

Understanding this early on is crucial, because:

WHEN YOU GET MARRIED... you are going to get attacked.

your marriage will most consistently be the devil's biggest target on your life. And I am telling you now, it is WILL BE A HEAD ON, DIRECT ATTACK.

Because marriage is a reflection of the ONLY unstoppable relationship in the entire world... it is a reflection of the one relationship that God is going to use, and is even using now, to literally CRUSH SATAN. and that is the relationship between Jesus Christ and His church. The gates of hell will not prevail when the church of Jesus Christ comes and plowing through them! And Satan knows that. So he puts fire anywhere he can put it, to bring as many with him as he can.

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Dawn and I were at a pool party last week (on the 4th of July)... and we were talking to a lady there and she asked us "what do you guys do" we we told her we were pastors... and she kind of paused for a moment, and then said:

"do you have any advice?"

and we were both kind of like... well, without knowing anything about your life... I guess the first thing we would say is "go easier on yourself... don't carry it..." you know... *broad*, generic advice. (I need to seriously get better at the whole "words of knowledge" thing)

and then she said: "well how is this for a situation?: My husband of 35 years has been cheating on me for the last year, now we are getting divorced... he has set out to destroy me and our children. and I hate him.

how do I not hate him?

how do I forgive him, when I hate him?

"We are talking about my ENTIRE LIFE... for nothing... 35 years."

and that opened up a conversation by a pool that lasted quite a while... but she said something, actually pretty profound in the middle of it... She said that even after it all had started, she tried to walk through it with grace... she wanted to keep the family together... she didn't want to just throw away 35 years... and she said that she always kept one hand on Jesus, and the other on her husband...

So she tried to be the glue...

until he slipped further and further away, and suddenly, she said she let go of Jesus' hand, and she reached both hands out for her husband.

and that was when she knew he was gone.

Because when she let go of God, she lost them both... and she felt all alone...

and what is that? it is fire.

and its an all consuming fire... the kind that most people would never blame you for saying: Yes... I hate Him... How can I forgive? I can never forgive...

but it is fire.

and you cant fight fire with fire... but we try to. We fight betrayal with bitterness... because it seems like the only way.

we fight power trips and anger by trying to match it.

and it consumes us. and everyone involved gets burned.

I am telling you... maybe nobody here is going through exactly what she did... but some of us are walking through the same kind of fires..

Because the devil works in gaps, and he works those gaps until they get bigger and bigger...

You get into an argument in the kitchen over not doing the dishes, and it leads to an argument about raising the kids...

and it leads to "who is not doing their part in the family"... and it leads to conversations totally lacking love and totally lacking respect...

You think... that escalated quickly!!! what is that? it is fire. Because Satan is always going after what is God's... so he will dig as deep as he possibly can into that reflection to try and distort it.

But at the source of it, the core things are missing.

Authorship, and helper-ship (“ezer” (a-zair))

Men, from the beginning, we have been just awful leaders... Even in the garden, God gave Adam the command NOT to eat the fruit... and who eats the fruit? Well first, it was the woman... **who wasn't given the command from God...** but who WAS LEAD by her husband, who was an awful leader.

And do you know what God said to Eve after she ate of it? This explains more than I ever realized! We mentioned it last week... He said “I will multiply your pain in childbearing;”

but then it says this: your desire will be for your husband, **but he will rule over you.**

We read this as punishment for women... but really this is NATURE of men. This is the marital sign of the fall.

Because what will happen, is he will take authorship, which always considers the whole story... all the pieces... all the factors... the WHOLE family... and he will corrupt it. Because we live in a fallen, corrupted world. So when Paul emphasizes that the man needs to LOVE... it is not because women don't need to love... but it says right there... woman's desire is to be loved... but since the fall... the man's selfish desire is going to be to RULE.

But if you don't curb that, and approach it in love... there will be fire.

and it will get so completely out of control, because when you use force to get what you want, YOU EVENTUALLY LOSE HER RESPECT.

It is what happens when we don't operate in the way that we are supposed to... it is what happens when husbands don't love their wives with such a love that they are willing to give up their very lives for them...

sometimes its easy to say "I would die for you" -

but its a whole lot harder to do the things that make sure she is thriving, here and now, in your relationship... to be an intentional author of a home that is full of the kind of life that everyone would want...

but you have to understand that Paul tells husbands that you need to love your wives the same way that Jesus loved the church... by actually laying down everything for it.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her!"

When you grasp this, you realize that marriage should teach us about grace, better than anything else in the world possibly could.

Because you commit to someone... you give your entire life to someone, WHO IS SINFUL! And they are going to keep on sinning as life goes by... and they are going to keep on doing *the wrong thing* as life goes by. Hopefully there is growth, but there will always be mistakes.

The ONLY way to thrive in a marriage is to let marriage make you more like Jesus. Because Jesus sees all of our flaws... all of our faults... and yet every single day he accepts us just as we are... and he loved us so much that he laid down his life for us even in the middle of all the things that are there, that Jesus knows shouldn't be there.

and that is what the church is all about.

Grace. Community. People forgiving each other, accepting each other, and loving each other.

In the deepest places of all of our hearts everyone wants to be known, and they want to be needed. They want community, and they want a place to

contribute. They want someone else to look into the very soul of who they are, see all the bad stuff, and yet still be invited into something bigger than themselves.

and that is what makes the last verses of Ephesians 5 so powerful.

Paul says, “oh, by the way... the whole marriage thing? its just an image... the reason it is such a mystery and so many people struggle to figure it out, is because the whole thing is an image of a concept that is far bigger, more powerful, and more mysterious then any human relationship could possibly fathom... THE CHURCH.

Most marriages are barely hanging on.

and in conjunction... most churches are barely hanging on.

because the average person enters both of these institutions with selfish ambitions wondering “What am I going to get out of this?”

RATHER THAN: How do I let this transform every part of my life in such a way that I have something that I can contribute...

THAT I COULD GIVE MY LIFE TOO.

Everything hard about marriage is WORTH IT. Because on the other side of the hard times, you are still “*echad*” with a person who you sometimes don’t even understand, and that teaches us about the love of Christ, and it teaches us about the church.

And just like Jesus prayed... the way the world will come to know Jesus, is when the church figures out that same kind of unity. That “*echad*” - the world will know God, when the church is ONE.

I want to close with a story... its not about marriage...

it IS about the church. Our Church.

It is about a woman who attended our church... many of you knew her, her name was Patricia.

Patricia came to our church with Ben and Melissa last summer... her story is just incredible... I can't get into it all... but to say the least, she had a **HARD LIFE**.

4 kids that she wasn't allowed to raise... there were times in her life when she would disappear, and nobody would see her for months...

and it seemed like hardships really followed her... but when she started coming here... something seemed change in her...

and she would come to every Sunday service and to every Thursday service or outreach... whatever was going on.

she was at church **BEFORE** Dawn and I even got here, every single week... she came to pre service prayer **EVERY WEEK**.

Melissa told me about times when Patricia would call her at 8:45am because she would get to church and it would be locked, and she would ask "are they having church today?" and Melissa would tell her "yes... you are just really early!"

We start church really, really late... apparently.

She would always share these testimonies from throughout the week... of the way God provided for her and met some random need...

and she would say things like this:

"when Emily sings... **I FEEL THE LOVE OF GOD!!!**"

after every sermon, she would tell me how "beautiful" it was.

It was like, when she connected with other people who were totally different from her... God was in the midst... and she could feel it.

but one Sunday morning during pre-service prayer, I noticed right away, she wasn't there.

I found out later that day that she had passed away that morning. At 39 years old.

but at her funeral, which I had the honor of teaching and sharing the gospel at... like most funerals, there was that moment when they opened up the microphone to friends and family to come and to say some words about her...

and everyone that got up was very consistent in what they said:

she had a HARD LIFE.
she has been through it all...

But then THEY ALL said this:

“but something changed about a year ago, when she started attending a church in her neighborhood called Courage Church...

and every time her and I would talk... she would tell me about this church... and how loving everyone was... and how much joy she felt there... and every time we saw her... she would invite me to her church...”

And every single person who stood up and shared, shared stories of how SINCE SHE CAME HERE... she had joy again... she had hope again.

If there was ever a time in my life when I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that COURAGE CHURCH IS HERE FOR A REASON, it was that moment.

because as many of you know... she was a joy to be around, but sometimes it was work... sometimes it was figuring out... HOW DO I MEET THIS BROKEN PERSON IN THE BROKEN STATE SHE IS IN RIGHT NOW... and a lot of times we had no idea... and A LOT of times we got it wrong!

HOW DO WE BE LIFE IN THIS MOMENT? HOW DO WE BE HEALING,
RIGHT NOW? and every moment was different.

But that someone who just about everyone had *given up on* could come into a place like this... and have such a life transformational encounter that EVERY SINGLE person who stood up at her funeral could point to a change... and say: I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ALL DID OVER THERE AT COURAGE CHURCH...

but it worked...

that A LIFE FILLED WITH FIRE...

and broken relationships. and pain...

Found community... and ended WITH GOD -

because a few people decided "we aren't going to give up - we don't have a clue what we are doing... but we are going to do something..."

That, as Paul says in Ephesians 5, can only be described... as a mystery.

as something so divine that it is impossible to put it into human terms. That Jesus Christ would reach down and use *our broken lives* to bring wholeness to another.

To bring order out of chaos.

The church is the hope of the world. God's ONLY plan to restore everything.

The bride of Christ.

A flawed bride, that Jesus died to make pure and spotless, and because of what HE DID, we are *worthy* of meeting him at the end of the isle.