

# STAND FIRM & ACT LIKE MEN

## Week 5: Be a Godly Husband

Men's Group Reading Summary | Church For The ONE

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*"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." — Ephesians 5:25*

### Overview

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Week 5 brings the series into the most personal arena of a man's life: his marriage. Every week has been building toward this. We have talked about watching, standing firm, and being strong — now all of that gets applied in the place where it is hardest and most consequential: at home, with the woman you promised your life to.

The teaching is anchored in Ephesians 5:25-27, and it does not soften the call. The standard God sets for husbands is not "be a decent guy" or "don't be a jerk." The standard is Christ. The way Jesus loved His bride, the church — that is the model. And once you understand what that actually means, it becomes one of the most humbling and clarifying passages in all of Scripture.

For the men in the room who are not yet married, or who are single, divorced, or widowed — this week still applies. The posture of agape love, sacrificial initiation, and commitment to the highest good of another person shapes every significant relationship a man carries.

### Part 1: Why God Created Marriage

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Before the roles, Paul establishes the reason. Marriage was not a human invention — God created it, God defined it, and God assigned it a purpose far bigger than companionship or even family. From the moment a man and woman stand at the altar to the moment one of them places the other in the arms of Jesus, their marriage is designed to be one thing above all else:

**Your marriage is meant to be a living, breathing picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

The husband represents Christ. The wife represents the church. Every day of your marriage — in the ordinary, the mundane, the difficult, the beautiful — you are either reflecting or distorting that picture to the world around you.

That reframes everything. The fights, the forgiveness, the pursuit, the sacrifice — none of it is just about the two of you. It is a testimony. It is a sermon your neighborhood, your children, and your community reads every single day.

When Paul turns to the husbands in Ephesians 5:25, the men who had just been celebrating the wives' instruction suddenly realize the weight that is about to land on them. The calling on a husband is not authority for authority's sake. It is a call to represent Christ to your wife — and that changes everything about what headship actually means.

## Part 2: The Word That Changes Everything — Agape

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Paul does not say husbands like your wives, appreciate your wives, or tolerate your wives. He says love — and the Greek word he uses is agape. This is not a feeling. It is not romantic electricity or emotional warmth, though those are good gifts. Agape is something far more demanding and far more durable than any of that.

**Agape: a self-giving, sacrificial love that seeks the highest good of another person regardless of merit or response.**

Not based on how she is acting. Not contingent on whether she deserves it. Not dependent on whether it is reciprocated. Agape is what Christ showed us when He loved us while we were still dead in our sin — before we cleaned ourselves up, before we earned it, before we responded.

That last phrase is the one that cuts deepest: regardless of merit or response. Every husband in that room knows what it feels like to love well and not have it received. Every husband knows the temptation to pull back when it is not reciprocated. Agape says: that is not the standard. The standard is the cross. Jesus did not wait for us to deserve it. He initiated.

*"We love because he first loved us." — 1 John 4:19*

Jesus was the initiator. He left heaven for an undeserving bride. He did not sit with His arms folded and say, "Get your act together and maybe I'll come love you." He came when we were dead, when we had done nothing to merit it, and He loved us first. That is the model for every husband. You are the initiator of love in your marriage. Not waiting to be appreciated. Not responding to how she treats you. Going first.

## Part 3: Three Expressions of Christ-Like Love

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The passage in Ephesians 5:25-27 gives husbands three specific ways that Christ loved the church — and each one becomes a direct application for marriage:

## 1. He Loved Her First — Be the Initiator

Jesus pursued His bride. He crossed the distance. He made the first move — not when we were lovable, but when we were lost. In the same way, a godly husband does not wait for the conditions to be right before he initiates love. He sets the pace. He reaches across conflict. He pursues his wife the way Christ pursued the church — relentlessly, without waiting to be deserved.

What does initiation look like practically? It looks like reaching for her hand when the tension is thick. It looks like asking how she is doing and actually listening. It looks like praying over her out loud. It looks like planning something for her — not because she asked, but because you went first. It looks like apologizing first, even when you think the fault is split.

## 2. He Gave Himself Up — Be the One Who Lays Things Down

Christ gave Himself up for the church. Go read Gethsemane. He did not want to die — He sweat drops like blood praying through it. He laid down His rights as the Son of the living God, took on human flesh, and went to the cross. Not His fault. He did it anyway, out of love.

For husbands, this means a regular, honest evaluation: Is there anything in my life I need to lay down in order to love my wife better? The message names them directly and without apology — alcohol, fantasy football, video games, anger, the love of money. Whatever it is that is competing for the time, the attention, and the energy your wife was meant to receive — that is what is on the table.

### What do you need to lay down to love her like Jesus did?

This is not about blame or guilt. It is about honest inventory. A man who is filled with Christ has something to give. A man who is filled with everything else has already spent what his wife needed most.

Laying things down is not weakness — it is the most powerful expression of love available to a husband. Jesus had all authority and still went to the cross. The strongest thing a man can do is willingly give up what he has a right to for the sake of the woman he loves.

## 3. He Sanctified Her — Be the One Who Calls Her Higher

Ephesians 5:26-27 reveals the ultimate purpose behind everything Jesus did for the church: that He might sanctify her, cleanse her, and present her in splendor — without spot or wrinkle or blemish, holy and without blemish. Jesus did not just love the church as she was. He loved her toward who she was created to be.

This is one of the most sobering statements in the entire series. Besides herself, the number one person responsible for the sanctification of your wife is you. Your love — or the absence of it — is either calling her toward the fullness of who God made her to be, or it is leaving her to find her way there without you.

A godly husband creates an environment — through his love, his prayers, his words, his presence — where his wife becomes more fully herself. More confident in her identity. More secure in her worth. More free to be who God designed her to be. That is what it means to sanctify someone through love. It is not control. It is not criticism. It is the kind of love that makes someone better simply because of how they are loved.

*"...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." — Ephesians 5:27*

## Part 4: Run to the Cross

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The message ends where it begins: at the cross. If you are ever confused about what it looks like to love your wife the way Christ loved the church — stop trying to figure it out in your head. Run to the cross. Get on one knee and look up at your Savior hanging there, blood from His hands and feet, giving everything for an undeserving bride who could offer nothing in return.

Then stand up. Go home. And love your wife like that.

That is the calling. Not a perfect husband — Jesus is the only perfect husband. But a pursuing husband. An initiating husband. A laying-things-down husband. A calling-her-higher husband. A man whose marriage tells the story of the gospel to everyone watching.

## Discussion Questions

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### Opening Up

1. Before this teaching, how would you have described the purpose of marriage? How does the idea that your marriage is meant to be a living picture of the gospel change or challenge that?
2. Agape is defined as love that seeks the highest good of another regardless of merit or response. On your most honest day, how much of your love for your wife is agape — and how much is conditional on how she is treating you?

### Going Deeper

3. Jesus was the initiator — He loved first, before we deserved it or responded. In your marriage (or your most significant relationships), are you the initiator of love and pursuit — or are you mostly reacting and responding? What would it look like to go first this week?

4. The message asks directly: what do you need to lay down to love your wife better? What came to mind when you heard that question? Have you been honest with yourself — and with God — about what it is?
5. A godly husband is responsible for helping sanctify his wife — calling her toward who God made her to be. Does your wife feel more fully herself because of how you love her? What does the environment of your marriage currently produce in her?

## Getting Honest

6. The picture of a husband on one knee at the cross, then going home to love his wife like that — what would have to change in your daily life for that image to become your actual posture? What is the biggest gap between that picture and where you are today?
7. For the men who are not currently married: how does the agape standard and the posture of initiation, sacrifice, and calling someone higher show up in the relationships you do have — friendships, family, the men in this room?

### **This Week's Challenge**

Do one thing this week that costs you something and benefits her — not because she asked, not because the mood is right, and not because you feel like it. Go first. Initiate. Lay something down. Speak something true over her. That is what agape looks like with work boots on.