



FINDING A PATH FORWARD TO PUT ON NEW BEHAVIORS

Ephesians 4 talks about how there are behaviors that don't fit us anymore because Jesus clothes us in a new way of living. Chapter 5 explains what those new behaviors are to show us a pathway forward in new behaviors. We sometimes think we can change behaviors to change our hearts, which is just another form of "works" theology. Instead, as Jesus changes our hearts, it will overflow into our lives.

1. How is changing your behavior to change your heart different from changing your heart to change your behavior?

WITHOUT A VISION FOR WHO MEN ARE SUPPOSED TO BE, WE ARE LEFT TO EXAMPLES, EXPECTATIONS, AND EXPERIENCES OF WHO WE THINK WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE.

Paul sets forth marriage as an application of faith into our everyday lives. We live in a day and time when we have perspectives on this topic like the hyper-masculine male, the male whose identity is in his sexuality, the chauvinistic male who elevates himself over women, the overcompensating male that feels like he's lacking something so he tries to make up for it in another area, or the emasculated male who's never had a good example or doesn't know how to be a man. Many guys are already acutely aware of the things they are not and this isn't a series to focus on the negative, but Paul tells us we need to be aware of our behaviors.

2. What are your perspectives on modern day manhood? How do you perceive our culture defines "being a man"?

THE BIBLE GIVES MEN A VISIONS FOR WHO WE'RE CREATED TO BE.

We need to understand what God aspires men to be because God, as the Creator of men, is uniquely qualified to define manhood. No matter where you are now as a man, you're dependent on the Holy Spirit for who you should be. Everyone has deficiencies in their life but as male believers, we're on a journey to become the men that Christ intends us to be.

3. MEN: How do you believe God is calling you to be a biblical man that may be counter-culture? How is that a challenge?

A MAN'S HIGHEST CALLING IN MARRIAGE IS TO LOVE HIS WIFE

[Ephesians 5:25-33] Marriage has always been a challenge and takes work. (Everyone married in the group can say "Amen!") Paul presents a vision of what marriage should be. In Paul's time, a woman was regarded as a property, a man's duty was simply to provide, and a woman's duty was to provide an heir; however, Paul tells us the highest duty of a husband is to love. The weight of the responsibility falls on the husband. Someone has to keep the rhythm that others respond to, and the man is the pacemaker of a marriage. The aim is to love like Jesus. Matthew Henry writes that a man was made from the rib of Adam, from his side to be equal, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved.

4. What are practical ways a man can be the "pacemaker" in marriage?

MEN SHOULD LOVE THEIR WIVES LIKE JESUS LOVED THE CHURCH.

Most men would say they love their wives and show it by hugging, helping around the house, complimenting her, etc. We can look at behaviors that show love, but Paul says the standard is to love your wife as Christ loved the church. It's a lofty and supernatural aspiration, so what does that mean? How did Jesus demonstrate His love for the church? He did three things: He pursued, He gave, and He served.

5. MARRIED MEN: How do you demonstrate love to your wife? WIVES: What most speaks love to your heart?

MARRIED MEN PURSUE WITH INTENTIONALITY AND PURPOSE

[John 1:14] Jesus moved toward us with purpose and intentionality. He was not passive. There are several relationships a man must pursue. A married man should pursue his wife's hearts and personhood. Men should also pursue meaningful male relationships because many men have lost good, defining male relationships and lost the importance of this because of their careers or something else. They find themselves isolated. When we find ourselves isolated, we find ourselves vulnerable, moving us away from people that could speak into our lives. Fathers need to pursue their children, acting as their first and finest example of fatherhood. (If you haven't been an exemplary father in the past, it's never too late to start). Men should be pursuers of their careers, using their gifting to its highest and best use. Many men are goal oriented, so for marriage the alter was the goal, and after reaching the goal there can be passivity. The hallmarks of pursuing are intentionality and being purposeful.

6. MEN: Which of these areas of pursuit most spoke to you? What is your action plan of purposeful and intentional response?

MARRIED MEN SERVE

[Mark 10:45] Jesus came to serve. He didn't lose His identity in that process. To serve means "to meet the needs of". If you don't know the needs of your spouse, maybe a conversation needs to happen. When service becomes an attribute of marriage, it dismantles selfishness and brings into align motivations. Many times, service can be with ulterior motivations. Jesus placed our future in front of His personal comforts.

7. COUPLES CHALLENGE: Schedule a time to talk about needs. Put it on the calendar!

MARRIED MEN GIVE

[Mark 10:45] To give means "to sacrifice for". Jesus was willing to do what was for the betterment of the other. Sometimes, sacrifice is not taking the next step in your career to make time for family. Making family a priority communicates what's most important. Living toward this high bar of the mystery of Christ and the church means asking daily for the Lord to create in us a love for our spouse and family a little more like Jesus love for us so we can exemplify Jesus within our marriages and families. If your marriage is not in a good place, Jesus can resurrect it.

8. What are of "giving" in your relationship(s) is the Holy Spirit putting on your heart? How will you respond this week?

UNTIL NEXT TIME...

CELEBRATE! 22 baptisms on Easter Sunday! • STUDY! The Gospel of Luke in anticipation of our next series.

- ENCOURAGE! Men, find good male relationships and pray to love more like Jesus in your family. Women, pray for your husbands.
- SERVE! Sign up for the Great American Clean-Up / April 20, 2024