

Charles Murray, a political scientist and author, gave a lecture earlier this year at the University of Virginia Law School. He summarized his 2012 book, *Coming Apart*, which studies the dramatic contrast between working class, white America and upper middle class, white America.

He talked about interviewing single mothers, both white and black, about why they didn't marry the men, who fathered their children. The unsentimental answer he received was, "It would be like adding another child to the household, and I'm not going to do that." (<http://www.law.virginia.edu/lawweb/news.nsf/PP/PodcastFrontPage>, scroll down to 2.21.2013, accessed October 26, 2013)

Our national preoccupation with women's rights obscures an even more ominous danger. Who is teaching boys to be men? The extremist rhetoric in women's studies, the erosion of sexual restraint among young women, and absentee dads make the difficult process of growing into manhood more difficult than ever.

Boys need dads who model what manhood means, and dads need to model what manhood means on Jesus Christ. That's what our biblical text is about today. Here is the text in Ephesians 5:25: **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**

Submit (Again)

We start today where we left off last Sunday: **Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.** The emotionally charged word is **submit**. It seems to contradict current ideas of equality, and it seems to carry with it the idea of having to do things a wife doesn't want to do, even if it she thinks it is wrong. We talked about that last week.

The apostle did not use the word **submit** when talking to Christian husbands. I'd like to ask you what word you would use to sum up the meaning of verse 25? **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**

How exactly did Christ love the church and give Himself up for her? Here are a few examples. Mark 14:36, Jesus: "**Abba, Father,**" he said, "**everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.**" Mark 14:45-46: **Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him.** Mark 14:64-65: **They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.** Mark 15:24: **And they crucified him.**

The New Testament writers never refer to that sequence of events as tragedy or a travesty of justice. They uniformly refer to it as an act of love. John 3:16: **God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.** Revelation 1:5: **To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.** 1 John 3:16: **This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.** Ephesians 5:25 holds its own: **Love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**

To any woman who bristles at the suggestion that she should submit to her husband, I would ask her: What word would you use to sum up what the Bible asks your husband to do? "**Not what I will, but what you will**" sounds to me like submission to God. Receiving without resistance Judas with "the perfidious kiss writhing on his lips" sounds like submission to me. Refraining from calling on 12 legions of angels to defend Him from flogging, mocking, and crucifixion sounds like submission to me.

The problem for women is not submitting to their husbands as to the Lord, and the problem for men is not loving their wives as Christ loved the Church. Our problem is that we think we know better than the Word of God what makes for human happiness. Instead, we listen to the wisdom of the world, which is being discredited almost daily in a frightening accumulation of failures. Charles Murray's book is a case in point.

The invitation today is the same as it was last Sunday: Let's look at the biblical text and at the world we live in and ask: "How can we make the Bible work in our world?" Last Sunday, we read Ephesians 5:23, which says that **the husband is the head of the wife**. If we men think that means we just throw our weight around, we don't get it. Leaders can be decisive, they usually are; the good ones always want ownership of ideas by the people who work with them. Great leaders want feedback from the people who work with them, including feedback that contradicts their own ideas. It helps them make better decisions. Why would that not be good for your marriage and family?

Loving Your Wife in a Feminist World

Let's talk about how to love your wife in a feminist world. In July 2012, the Atlantic Magazine published an article titled "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," by Anne-Marie Slaughter, a Princeton University professor and the first woman to serve as Director of Policy Planning for the U.S. State Department, from 2009 to 2011.

She resigned that lofty position, and people wondered why she did that. Here's her explanation: "I realized that I didn't just *need* to go home. Deep down, I *wanted* to go home. I wanted to be able to spend time with my children in the last few years that they are likely to live at home, crucial years for their development into responsible, productive, happy, and caring adults."

Professor Slaughter is urbane, intelligent, accomplished, and she was (and perhaps still is) a woman at war with herself. Millions of women are like her. They don't know exactly what to do with the feminist mythology that says, "You can have it all." So, here's the question for husbands, who want to obey Ephesians 5:25: How do you love your wife, who is trying to have a career and be a wife and mom; and: How do you love your wife, who is a stay-at-home wife and mom, and who faces enormous pressure to have a career outside her home? I promised you last week that I would not prescribe for you how to put these verses to use in your relationships. So, how can we make the Bible work in our world?

First, guys, try to see the world through your wife's eyes and feel what it is like at times to be a wife and mother with or without a career. "Caring for children takes place, for the most part, in private. There is no payment. Most of the time there is no audience. There are no promotions and few thanks." (Elizabeth Corey, *First Things*, "No Happy Harmony, 50) It is an ideal environment in which to rear children, but it "can also be tiring and frustrating, not to mention lonely. A woman must be extraordinarily self-assured to withstand the self-doubt that might cause her to wonder at times whether she has done the right thing" to give up a career or to have a career. (Ibid, 53) She needs to know you are right there with her in the struggles she is having.

Seeing the world through her eyes year in and year out requires a lot of listening. In fact, it's not my business to tell you what it requires. Sit down with her, and let her tell you what she needs from you, and if you want to love her like Christ loves the Church, move heaven and earth to provide what she needs.

Second, guys, if you are going to love your wife as Christ loved the Church, you will do all in your power to understand the bind in which she and millions of other women find themselves, as they try to blend career and family. Don't try to fix it. You can't do that. Have with your wife and your children an open and open-ended conversation about balancing career and family. The most loving thing you can do in that conversation is to be realistic: she can't balance them. She may do both, but she will make very difficult sacrifices by doing both. Listen often and carefully. Try to understand and occasionally ease her load and her frustration and her guilt.

Making a Home

Now, I need to say more about why it is impossible to balance career and family. I believe it will deepen our appreciation for what it means for a man to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and to build together a strong and safe marriage.

What makes you good in the office is not what makes you good at home. In today's business climate, you need intellectual and organizational skills, which you don't have when you start a career. You have to learn them and hone them and mesh them with other knowledge workers and their learning curves. Personal development is a necessity in careers that create jobs and make money.

But at home what do children want? "They want patience, calm, and the full attention of their mothers, which are exact opposites of what the hectic pace of professional work often requires. Children do not want a parent who is physically present but multitasking; they want the parent to look at them and listen to what they have to say. They want attention as they swim, draw, or play the piano. This requires . . . focused activity that is not in the service of achievements." (Ibid, 50) They want it year after year, especially from their mothers, but they also need it from their dads.

You can't run your home the way you run your workspace. The skill sets are different. And in any case children are totally unimpressed with our careers. They need from you something different from what your job requires of you. They need you. That's why balancing them is not possible. I'm not saying you shouldn't try. I am saying: Don't torment yourself with expectations that are not realistic. Loving your wife like Christ loved the Church means you will help her watch for those unrealistic expectations.

Take-aways

So, where do we go with this? First, I think we should challenge strong women in American culture to tell the truth to our daughters. I want to say to the Betty Friedans and Germaine Greers at the beginning of the Feminist Movement and to the Anne Marie Slaughters and Hilary Clintons in the teenage years of Century 21: "Stop telling our daughters they can have it all. Tell them they will have to make very real sacrifices by having a career and a family, and there are very real and painful consequences of the sacrifices they choose to make." I would also say to them, "Don't forget that most young women don't have and will never have your wealth. Most of them will just be trying to keep it together economically, and when they fail, it is catastrophic for them."

Second, I hope you take away from these two sermons last week and today that submission within Christian marriage is a mutual act. Ephesians 5:21 already said that: **Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.** God still holds the husband accountable as the head of the house. But the husband is not a bully but a servant leader.

I hope you also take away that the sacrifices of mutual submission is not an intruder into marriage. It is intrinsic to good marriage. We can no more escape sacrifice in marriage than a woman can escape contractions in childbirth. Don't shy away from hard times in your marriage. They are a prerequisite to happiness.

Christian Marriage with all its beauty and promise and all its conflict and danger is a visible representation of an invisible beauty and promise and of an invisible conflict and danger between Christ and the Church. Listen again to the apostle's words: **Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.** Your marriage can be "the scent of a flower (the world has) not found, the echo of a tune (it has) not heard, news from a country (it has) never yet visited." (Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, 5) The politics of love between Christ and His Church becomes visible in this world in the politics of love between a husband and wife.

Let's be more committed to the sacramental significance of marriage than to the fleeting emotions that once gave our love a jumpstart. Be as committed to your marriage as we are to your mate.