

Love and Respect

(Ephesians 5:15-33)

Introduction

1. Series: "Honor Trumps Conflict."
 - a. How honoring Jesus overcomes family-destroying habits by honoring one other.
 - b. Families: This includes relationships at home, work, socially, and church.
2. John Gottman's "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse": The 4 most destructive behaviors in relationships.
 - a. Criticism: Attacking the other's personality/character (instead of the issue); complaint about their "defect."
 - i. "You're so selfish" (vs. "I feel frustrated when all the ice cream is gone before I get any.")
 - ii. Often uses: "You always..."; "You never..."
 - b. Contempt: Attacking the other person from a position of superiority to them.
 - i. "You're so stupid."
 - ii. This behavior is the greatest predictor of divorce.
 - c. Defensiveness: Protecting myself with "righteous indignation" because I am an "innocent victim."
 - i. Responding to perceived attack by redirecting with a counter attack, shifting blame, making excuses.
 - ii. "It's not my fault we're always late; it's yours."
 - d. Stonewalling: Emotionally withdrawing & shutting down.
 - i. Give silent treatment, walk out, send non-verbal cues that you're not listening (e.g., rolling my eyes)
 - ii. Passive-aggressive form of attack.
 - e. Measuring these 4 behaviors can predict divorce with ~94% accuracy.
3. How do we overcome the destructive habits entrenched in ourselves & our families?

We submit to authority to practice obeying Jesus [Eph 5:15-21]

1. Overall context: This passage is one long, run-on sentence about practical Christian living.
 - a. [15-20] *Principle*: In a world of darkness, Jesus followers must live wisely as example of His light & goodness.
2. [21] Living in wisdom includes submitting to one another in various relationships, "*out of reverence for Christ*."
 - a. Not everyone submit to everyone else; then no one is responsible for decisions, & nothing gets done.
 - i. We all need to submit within the structure of authority *established by God* (cf. Rom 13:1-2).
 - ii. Particularly in 3 primary relationships: Marriage, parent-child, work.
 - b. *Principle*: **To overcome relational conflicts, submit to God-appointed authority to practice obedience to Jesus.**
 - i. Throughout history, *rebellion against God* is at the heart of sin & brokenness in relationships.
 - ii. *Submission to God* (& His appointed authority) is the key to building healthy, godly relationships.
 - c. If we honor Jesus as Lord, King & God of our lives, then also honor the framework of authority He established in our lives (in our families & society).
 - i. How does this apply in marital relationships?

Women honor Jesus by respecting their husbands [Eph 5:22-24]

1. [22-23] Wives honor Jesus by submitting to our husbands.
 - a. [22a] "Submit to your husband" (not all men).
 - i. Unpleasant connotations in our culture: Backward, patriarchal oppression
 - ii. Christianity is revolutionary in treating women as equal in value, contribution and worth.
 - iii. You are not a Cinderella (without the happy ending), sex slave, punching bag, or doormat.
 - b. Submission: Like a dance between 2 people, one must lead.
 1. If neither leads, or both compete/struggle to lead, we can't go anywhere.

2. When one willingly submits to the other, we experience a beautiful dance that both can enjoy.
 - c. [22b] Key: "As to the Lord"
 - i. Do I treat my husband as God? No, I submit to him as an act of love & obedience to Jesus.
 - ii. Submission isn't really about the other person, but about God.
 - iii. Submission is an act of worship that honors Jesus: (cf. Col 3:23) Just as I work unto the Lord (not just an imperfect boss), I submit unto the Lord (not just an imperfect husband).
 - d. [23] Theological basis: God ordained a structure placing the husband as the head of the wife, to reflect & remind us how Jesus is the head of us (the church, His bride).
 - i. Our submission to our husband represents our practice of obeying Jesus (cf. 5:21).
2. What is submission? [A godly woman's perspective]
 - a. Choosing to place myself under my husband's leadership, because I trust & submit to Jesus.
 - b. Submission is not compliance
 - i. Compliance is done out of fear or apathy toward a husband
 - ii. Submission is done out of love & trust in Jesus & my husband.
 - c. Submissions is not blind obedience
 - i. You don't check your brain at the door, or just "do as you're told."
 - ii. I can still have opinions; I have freedom to express them in Christ-honoring, husband-building ways.
 - iii. Ultimately, I accept my husband's leadership/decision... and not hold it against him when he's wrong.
 3. [24] When must I submit?
 - a. Problem: Most women do submit to their husband... *when it's convenient*.
 - i. "I'll yield to him, if I agree."
 - ii. As the church submits to Jesus in everything (we don't get to pick & choose), so also wives should submit in everything.
 - b. What if he leads us into sin?
 - i. Jesus' authority trumps my husband's: I cannot submit when it violates God's Word & commands, but must bow to a higher authority.
 - ii. If he is abusive, cruel or violent, does God want me to "just take it"? No; that behavior is sin.
 1. What is most honorable to Christ & beneficial to my husband? To set godly boundaries.
 - c. What if it's not sin, but my husband is just wrong?
 - i. What if I don't respect/trust him, or he's not following Jesus? Do I still have to place myself under his leadership?
 - ii. If your dance partner takes the wrong step, we don't just criticize, take over, or stomp away; we still let him lead *instead of giving up on God's process*, in & through our husband.
 - iii. *Illustration*: Christian wife with non-Christian husband's ongoing financial missteps.
 1. "As I pray for my husband, I trust You, Jesus, to work through his decisions. I won't bulldoze my own way; I'll wait on Your timing & way through my husband. Even if things go wrong, I trust You to provide & correct. In my obedience, You are faithful. I know You are Lord over all, including the husband You gave me."
 2. This is a step of faith, act of trust/submission to God, even when I don't want to.
 4. Impact of submission
 - a. Submission is a testimony about Jesus to both the world and my husband (cf. 1 Pet 3:1-2).
 - b. The reason it's so powerful: It communicates respect & honor to a man.
 - i. God hard-wired men to thrive under that validation/affirmation from their wives.
 - ii. It gives them courage to rise up to become a man of God & spiritual leader.
 - iii. Informal poll: If men had to choose between feeling loved or respected, most chose respect.
 - c. If you want to change the outcome of disagreements, honor changes people.
 - i. **Submission honors husbands with the respect that they need.**
 - ii. Practice honoring & submitting to your husband, and see how it changes his attitude & motivates him to give his best for you.
 - d. *Illustration*: Craig & Amy Groeschel counseling a couple
 - i. Amy Groeschel responds to the wife's verbal criticisms: You dishonor your husband & need to stop.
 - ii. Wife: If my husband was half the man yours is, then maybe I'd show him honor.
 - iii. Amy: Maybe Craig is the man that he is *because I've showed him honor* all these years.
 5. Application: Will you honor Jesus by placing yourself under the leadership He established in your marriage, in your husband?
 - a. Even when you don't agree with your husband, will you trust Jesus & turn to Him?
 - b. What are some of the excuses we make not to submit to our husbands?
 - c. How do we need to practice expressing our opinions in an edifying manner that honors Jesus & our husband?

Men honor Jesus by loving their wives [Eph 5:25-31]

1. [25] Husbands honor Jesus by loving our wives.
 - a. Key: "As Christ loved the church." How does Jesus love us?
 - i. Jesus does not lord it over His bride (the church)
 - ii. He "gave Himself up for her": Jesus surrenders His rights & life to serve & sacrifice Himself for her
 - iii. Husbands do the same for your wife.
 - b. Application: What do you consistently put ahead of your wife? Work, financial portfolio, games, hobbies, sports, kids, self? How does that need to change?
 - c. Application: If you're unmarried, how are you sacrificially preparing yourself to love your wife, even before you meet or marry her?
2. [26-27] The purpose of sacrificial love
 - a. [26] Jesus gives Himself up for His bride *to sanctify her*.
 - i. To make her holy & cleansed through obedience & transformation in the Word of God.
 - ii. Like Jesus, we are self-sacrificial to help our wives grow in Christ, His Word, faithfulness, holiness.
 - b. Application: What sacrifices are you making for your wife's good?
 - i. Do I love God's Word & minister it to my wife?
 - ii. How does what I say or do help her to become healthy & holy in Christ?
 - iii. How do I set a bad example for her in unholy ways?
 - iv. Do I use the Word to beat her (criticize & condemn), or to empower, encourage & nurture her to be holy & Christ-like in character?
3. When must I love sacrificially?
 - a. When she's cruel, nags, wrong, or sins against me, do I still have to give myself up for her sanctification?
 - b. Illustration: When Josh & Melissa disagree, Melissa has a hard time speaking up when things are tense.
 - i. Josh grumbles: Why do I have to initiate?
 - ii. Melissa reveals: As a woman, sometimes it feels emotionally unsafe, & needs her husband to have the strength to initiate.
 - iii. Jesus reveals: *Being a spiritual leader isn't just having the authority to lead, but also the responsibility to lead*, to take risks, sacrifice & initiate.
 - c. Men can't say to wives: "You made this mess/mistake, you clean it up & fix it" (cf. Gen 3:12).
 - i. As a man, whether or not it's my fault, it's my responsibility.
 - ii. When I (as part of Jesus' bride/church) sin, is it Jesus' fault? Does He make me pay Him back? Or does He involve Himself to take care of my sin?
 - iii. Jesus took the initiative to reach out to us & reconcile us to Him by His suffering, sacrifice & death.
 - iv. Likewise, when there's sin, separation, division or strife, husbands take initiative to come in, and redeem & reconcile the relationship with our wives.
4. [28-31] Christ-like sacrificial love nourishes & cherishes
 - a. [28-30] Like Jesus loves us, we love wives by nourishing & cherishing her as if she was our own body.
 - b. [31] Theological basis: God teaches that when we separate from our family of origin & form a new family with our wives, we become one (one flesh/body)
 - i. If you're not taking care of her, you're not caring for yourself; what you do to her & for her affects you. If she's not doing well, neither are you.
 - c. "But I am sacrificial; look what I give up for her needs."
 - i. Some work hard & provide, but are physically & emotionally absent
 1. If she cries for attention, you get irritated & scold her.
 2. When your hand is in pain, it's like biting or ignoring it, hoping the irritation goes away.
 - ii. Some are very romantic & giving, but not in ways she wants/needs.
 1. You're too busy being in love with being in love.
 2. When your hand is in pain, it's like giving it a ring or manicure, but not the medicine it needs.
 - iii. Both have the same problem: We love wives in ways that are convenient for us, our own preferences, not her needs/desires.
 - d. Application: Discover how to nourish & cherish her in ways that feed her.
 - i. Take care of your own "body" by understanding what she needs & desires.
 - e. Illustration: Gary Chapman's "The 5 Love Languages"
 - i. Physical touch/affection, giving & receiving gifts, words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service
 - ii. Everyone has a primary one; women often have multiple (or all); they may change over time.
 - iii. How do I figure hers out?
 1. Discover by observing how she loves on you.
 2. Or just ask her preferences; it's good practice for genuine connection & communication.

5. Impact of sacrificial love
 - a. We don't just sacrifice by working hard to provide, or romancing wives in our own love language; we love sacrificially by learning & speaking hers.
 - i. Sacrificing for what she desires, communicates love to her: "I may not like to _____ (talk, snuggle, do chores, shop)... but I do like you."
 - b. **Sacrifice honors wives with the love they desire**, because it helps them to experience Jesus more.
 - i. God loves me; my husband loves me. God forgives, pursues, is involved, has my best interests in mind, gave up His life for me. So does my husband.
 1. It is a man's privilege & honor to love her in ways so that when she looks at her husband, she thinks of Jesus.
 - ii. Women: Men cannot be Jesus to you; they are not Messiah. But they can point you to Jesus.
 - iii. Men: The goal is to encourage & inspire your wife toward Jesus.
 1. Practice sacrificially-loving your wife, and see how she will trust, respect & follow you to the ends of the earth.
 - c. Application: Do I love, cherish, and nourish my wife in ways that feed her?
 - i. Have I discovered how she desires to be loved (her love languages)?
 - ii. Does she experience more of the love of Christ through the ways that I love her?

Conclusion [Eph 5:32-33]

1. [32-33] Marriage reveals more of Jesus.
 - a. [32] When there's oneness in marriage, it reveals Jesus' sacrifice, care, bond to us as His church/bride/body.
 - b. [33] God's command to love wives & respect husbands isn't just about us or for us; it is a witness to the world.
 - i. How He treats us: loves by nourishing, leads by cherishing, serves by sacrificing, to restore us.
 - ii. How we respond to Him: With trust, respect, submission, honor to Him.
 - c. Ideally they go together.
 - i. It's easy to submit to a husband who loves sacrificially like Jesus; it's easy to sacrificially nourish & cherish a wife who honors in submission.
 - d. However, God's command for you is not dependent on whether or not the other person complies.
 - i. We are responsible to honor & obey Jesus regardless of what the other person does or doesn't do.
 - ii. My role is to reveal Jesus in our marriage.
2. Honor trumps conflict [a poker analogy]
 - a. You have a full house: Your family (or desire for one); it's a very good hand (cf. Gen 1:27-28,31).
 - b. What can beat a full house?
 - i. Our mistake: Seeing problems & conflicts as the hand that trumps the full house of a happy home.
 1. "If only we had more money. If my husband wasn't so lazy, selfish, mean. If my wife wasn't always spending, controlling, nagging;" etc.
 2. Conflict isn't the problem; every marriage has conflicts.
 - ii. It's how we handle the conflicts that's the problem
 1. Attitudes, choices, responses to conflict issues.
 2. The 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse are all behaviors that express an attitude of dishonor toward the other person.
 3. Dishonor is what overcomes & destroys a happy family whenever conflict inevitably comes.
 - c. How can you save your full house?
 - i. Do we continue to play the same hand, hoping it beats a stronger one? Do we keep doing the same thing, and hope for the best?
 1. Definition of insanity: Doing the same thing over & over, and expecting a different outcome.
 - ii. We need to play a better hand to beat the obstacles, & what Jesus teaches us through Paul is: *Honor is the royal flush that trumps conflict.*
 - d. If our goal in life is to honor Jesus, then honor your wife with the love she desires, honor your husband with the respect that he needs.