

Reverse the Curse – 11/13/2011

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Does that land home for anybody? Too true. We're going to be getting to that clip about the head and the neck a little bit later on. We'll be talking about marriage. We're doing a series called Relatively Speaking. And we're looking at a kingdom perspective on all relationships and a kingdom perspective on relatives. And what we've seen so far is that having a kingdom framework, assessing things from a kingdom perspective changes everything. It changes how we think about honoring mothers and fathers, we saw that. It changes how we think about being single and how we think about courtship. And today we're going to see how it changes, or should change, how we think about or how we view marriage. But it applies to all relationships so even if you're not married, I encourage you to be tuning in on this. It's some important stuff we're going to be covering. Sometimes I give messages that are more motivational or emotive, kind of addressing the heart. Other times there more teaching kind, where the content driven. And this is one of those kind of messages so I'm going to ask you to really tune in, in about 10, 15 minutes it's gonna start to get kinda thick. First ten, pretty light, but then it's gonna require your mind here in a little bit. So pay attention to this. For some folks this will be review. For others it will be, I suspect, very new, and I will encourage you especially: when you're learning new stuff it sometimes doesn't come easy. This is a paradigm for marriage that I believe is just pure kingdom and yet it's very different from what is often given in Christian circles so be tuning in on this. I want to entitle this message 'Reversing the Curse on Marriage'. I'm not saying marriage is a curse. I'm saying reversing the curse in some marriages. Well you'll see what I'm talking about here in a little bit. And actually we're gonna have a two part series on this. We're gonna expand the series one week because as we were putting together I realized I want to address the paradigm for marriage this week and then next week we'll talk about conflict in marriage and divorce and remarriage. You'll want to come back for that. And it will also have principles that apply to everyone. Pray with me here for a moment.

Abba Father, we are your children and some may be here today or listening through podcast who are not your children, at least they are not yet submitted to you and we pray that this message would be used to draw them in closer. But God we just acknowledge that you are our Lord and we love you. And we pray, God, that you would use this message to further your will to bring the kingdom into our marriages, to bring the kingdom into all of our relationships to transform us, God, to take us out of the Egypt of the culture and into the promise land of your kingdom and all that that entails in all of its beauty. Use this message, God, to further your will. And all of God's kids said, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen.

Okay. Let's start again by reviewing what we've covered so far. We've seen that in the first century the father defined the family. In the first century Jewish culture, and this is true of most cultures throughout history, not all, but most, the father defined the family; the father had total authority over the family. The ultimate allegiance of everybody was towards their father and the family and that was the most important allegiance in the ancient world. And the job of kids, was to show honor to the father and to the family, to live in a way that carries out the will of the father and to expand the family by having kids, getting married and having kids. Jesus, we have seen, takes that patriarchal structure with the father being over all and he applies it to God and us. And so we've seen that when we come and we submit ourselves to God, he goes from being just the 'supreme being' to being *Abba* Father. *Abba* is the Aramaic word that means dad. There's an intimate relationship that's created as we're born from above. And so now everything that was true of the earthly family in first century Jewish culture becomes true of the heavenly family. The father defines all, *Abba* father has authority over all. Our ultimate allegiance is to *Abba* and his family, the family of all who do his will. And our job as kingdom kids is to live in a way that bring honor to *Abba* father, the carries out the will of *Abba* father and expands the family of *Abba* father whether it's by having our own kids and raising them to be kingdom people or adopting kids and raising them to be kingdom people or we're all called to live in a way that invites others into the kingdom to evangelize. The kingdom changes everything about marriage. It changes everything about our life. We'll see that here, it transforms that patriarchal structure of earthly families. In the first century and in most traditional cultures, let's talk about the family here, the husband had total authority over his family and over his wife, in fact the husband virtually owned his wife. The husband purchased the wife from the man that previously owned her and that was her father. That was the dowry system. And so the husband had total authority and the primary job of the wife was to bear children and to expand the husband's family. The kingdom comes into that world and it revolutionizes this paradigm, completely changes it. And to see how it changes it, I want us to zoom out a little bit and a bigger picture – a bigger slice of the kingdom and then we'll see where marriage fits into this. So for the next ten minutes we're gonna zoom out just a little bit. The kingdom that Jesus inaugurated was such that when we are born from above our total identity and all of our allegiance is to be to *Abba* and his father. That means that we're not to get our identity from anything else, not to be defined by anything else, and we're not to have any allegiance that competes with *Abba* and with carrying out his will on earth as it is in heaven. That's our total definition; our total allegiance is to be found in our relationship with God. Now see, in the fallen world, the world before Christ and the world that's still outside Christ, the world that's not submitted to Christ people are defined by a lot of different things, so people have allegiance to a lot of different things. Whatever's part of your core identity you're going to have allegiance to. You find significance in that. So people can be defined by their nationality. Part of their identity can be their race or part of their identity can be social

status, they think about themselves, that's what they think about so that's their allegiance. Or their identity might be in their political views, how right they are. Or they might be in their gender, or they might be in their achievements, or in their religion, there's a billion things that people can have their identity in and whatever you have your identity in that's where your allegiance is going to be and so people have their allegiance to these sorts of things. For example if my identity is rooted in my nationality, I'm Japanese or I'm French or I'm Irish, well then part of your allegiance is going to be to Japan or to France or to Ireland. So if anyone slanders or threatens France or Japan or Ireland, well then you get irate about that, because whatever that to which we have allegiance gets threatened we tend to get irate, we get angry, we get hostile. Or maybe my identity is in the fact that I'm a man, I'm male, I'm macho, and if that's the case then my allegiance will be to that. There's a lot of significance in that. So if someone questions my masculinity, not that anyone ever could, of course, but if someone were to question my masculinity or if someone were to threaten or take away my authority as a male, I would get very irate. Whenever our identity gets threatened and our allegiance gets threatened we get irate. That's why the world outside of Christ is such a hostile world, full of violence. History's been a merry-go-round of violence. The reason is because people have allegiances in things that they get their identity from and they clash with one another. So we find this conflict in the world.

Okay. The kingdom that Jesus came to plant, the kingdom that Jesus inaugurates, that's a kingdom that does away with all those identities and does away with all that allegiance. It's radical. Because we're defined completely by our relationship with *Abba*, and so our allegiance is *Abba* and to the family and carrying out his will. And that means that we're not to invest, kingdom people, listen, we're not to invest anything else with significance. It's just not where our identity is, so it's not where our allegiance is. We don't have to invest any significance into our nationality or any significance in our race or our social status or our gender or our achievements. Those things in the kingdom come to mean nothing. So I'm up here talking to you as an American; but, if I'm thinking straight, I'm an American, that's fine, but it's not going to be my core identity, it's not going to be how I identify myself. And so I'm not going to have any significant allegiance to that. So if someone slanders America or threatens America, I may not agree with them, but I'm not going to be irate or hostile about it because it's not my treasure. It's not where my heart is. It's not where my identity is. It's not where my allegiance is. Or, I'm standing up here talking to you, and I'm a male, as I mentioned a little bit ago, you may have already noticed that I'm 100% hunk of a male, all right, there you are. Pure male. MM. But if I'm thinking straight as a kingdom person, that's not going to be my identity. I'm not gonna get life from that. That's not where my allegiance is. So if someone threatens my masculinity or my position as a male, I may not agree with them but I'm not going to get hostile, I'm not going to get angry because it's not where my allegiance is. When a person derives their whole identity, their whole sense of worth and purpose and significance and

security, when all of that is derived from what God thinks about you as he has revealed it Jesus Christ dying on the cross. When all that you are is defined by your relationship with Christ, *Abba* father, well, then nothing else really matters; does it? Nothing else really matters. In the kingdom there's nothing very significant about your nationality or about your race or about your social status or about your gender. Nothing significant about what you have achieved or what you haven't achieved. It just doesn't matter. In the kingdom, when you're identified by your relationship with *Abba* father, it doesn't matter whether you're an American or Iraqi or Afghanistan or Spanish, it doesn't matter whether you're black or whether you're white or whether you're yellow. It just doesn't matter. Where you come from or what you've achieved or what you haven't achieved, it just doesn't matter. What your political views might be, whether you're socialist or whether capitalist or whether you're democrat or republican, it just doesn't matter, because the only thing that matters, whether you're a child of the king. The only thing that matters is that you're a kingdom kid. You're in the kingdom, you've been born from above. When you understand that, when that is our identity, you're free from all the silly distinctions and categories. Who cares whether you're male or female? You're born from above, you're in Jesus Christ, you've been washed in the blood, you're destined for heaven, you're seated with Christ in the heavenly places, you're filled with his spirit. It couldn't get better than that. All these other distinctions and rankings and hierarchies and all of that lose all of their significance. They are dwarfed by the glory of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, making us his children and we're members of his family. He's the only one that claims our ultimate allegiance. And see, so, the kingdom just blows up all that stuff. That's why you find in the New Testament some radical crazy sounding statements that are just beautiful. For example in Colossians, I mean Galatians, Paul says this:

In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you were baptized into Christ having clothed yourself with Christ.

Interesting statement.

There is therefore neither Jew nor Gentile.

Why? Because you clothed yourself with Christ.

There is neither slave nor free.

Why? Because you clothed yourself with Christ.

There is neither male nor female. For we are all one in Christ Jesus.

Why? Because you clothed yourself in Christ.

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

I love that passage. That's a great passage. You see, we're made, by having faith in Jesus Christ, we're made children of God. We are part of Abraham's seed. We're part of Abraham's family. We're his descendants, because Abraham is the father of all who believe. All right? So, we're now made part of *Abba's* family. We're descendants of Abraham, and the way you enter the family in the New Testament, and this is still true, the way that you join yourself to the family which is the bride of Christ, the corporate bride of Christ, is through baptism. That's the initiation ceremony, that's that wedding ceremony where you're betrothed to Christ. And all who have been baptized in Christ have clothed themselves with Christ. Now, the imagery there is fantastic because what Paul is getting at there is this: When a person goes down into the water, the word baptism is βαπτίζω (baptizō) in Greek and it means to immerse. And so, when a person goes into the water, they're clothed with the water, they're enveloped with the water, they're submerged in the water. So also, when a person joins themselves to Jesus Christ and becomes part of *Abba's* family, you're immersed in Christ, you're clothed with Christ. You wear, permanently, Jesus Christ. And that's why everything else about you becomes insignificant. Everything else is clothed. It disappears. You can't see it any more. You're wearing Jesus Christ. It's like, I've got scars here and there on my body. I've had growths removed and had an accident, have a big scar here and all that kind of stuff, but that's not significant. You don't see that. Why? Because I'm wearing clothes, and you can be thankful for that. Be a little hard to pay attention if I wasn't. Plus it'd be a little drafty up here. But see, it's clothes. Well, maybe now you're thinking: Where are his scars, because I just mentioned it. But, otherwise, you weren't thinking about it. It's insignificant. I'm wearing clothe. So, also, when you put on Jesus Christ, when you're immersed in Jesus Christ, everything about you is covered up, your gender, your race, it just becomes insignificant, your ethnicity, your achievements, your social class, all those things, they become utterly insignificant because you're wearing Jesus Christ. That's why he says there's neither male nor female. Throughout history we've invested those things a lot of significance, they have a lot of meaning. I'll say more about that in a second. But, in the kingdom, all those things are rendered insignificant. Beautiful. It's crazy. It's wild. It's radical. Another statement here that's even crazier. Paul says:

From now on those who are married should live as if they are not.

Did you ever notice that in the Bible? Now, pause for a moment. Paul had just said about ten minutes earlier a husband and wife shouldn't abstain from sex very long because they might fall into temptation, so whatever he means by that statement, he's not saying don't have sex. In case you were worried. We'll get to it a little bit later on.

From now on those who are married should live as if they are not; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

What an incredible passage. Here's what's going on. Paul is saying the present form of this world is the world that has all of those silly distinctions and all those silly allegiances and all those false identities. It's all passing away. And so, kingdom people, those who are part of *Abba's* family, we're to live now – to live out now what will be true later on. We're called the first fruits of the coming kingdom, the first fruits of the coming harvest. So, if the present form of the world is passing away, we're to live as though it already had passed away. We're putting on display the kingdom that is coming in the future. So what Paul is saying here is this: If you belong to *Abba's* family and that's your sole allegiance, that's your sole identity, then invest no significance in whether you're married or single. Doesn't matter. Invest no significance in whether you happen to be in circumstances that happen to cause you to mourn or good circumstances that cause you to be happy. Sometimes you mourn, sometimes you're happy. Don't make a big deal out of it. It's insignificant, you're clothed with Christ. And, if you buy something, fine, but don't act like you bought it, it's not yours, it's passing away. And if you use something that you bought, fine, but don't get engrossed in it, don't grab onto anything. It's all passing away. The present form of this world with all its categories, all its identities, all its allegiances, it's passing away. So we, kingdom people, who get our identity from *Abba* father and our allegiances from *Abba* father, we live now as if it has passed away. It means nothing to us, it means nothing to us. This is the kingdom revolution, folks, and it's radical and it's beautiful and it's free. It's free because you're free from all the allegiances and competing identities that are out there in the world. And it changes everything and, therefore, it changes marriages.

So, now let's go back to the marriage issue. In first century culture being a man meant a lot. It was invested with a lot of significance and people had allegiance to it. What is meant was that you had all the power. What it meant when you got married was that you owned your wife. That is part of the world that is passing away. That paradigm of doing marriage is part of the fallen world that's passing away. It's part of what we kingdom people are to live free from. You can see this if you go back to Genesis where, after that fall, the Lord shows up and talks to Adam and Eve and he says this to Eve. See, now it starts to thicken. The plot's gonna start to thicken, so be tuning in on this. He says to Eve:

Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.

Not a single Amen? I can't believe it. Okay. Now, here's the thing. This is often interpreted, I'd say, throughout history it's usually been interpreted as if that was a command, as if that was an imperative, as if God was saying that's the way that marriages are really supposed to be. And realize that throughout most of history it's been men doing the interpreting, so...do the math. Well, about forty years ago a woman who was an Old Testament professor, and this is beginning to be a new thing where women are starting to interpret the Bible for themselves, she noticed that this wasn't in the imperative. This isn't a command. It's not a prescription of how things are supposed to be. This is a description of, in fact, how things are gonna be. And what God is saying is that because of the fall, now, this wonderful plan that he had for marriage was going to be reduced to a power struggle. It was a woeful declaration of the sad state of marriage because of the fall. The word rule here, it has a connotation of conquering, subduing. The man's gonna subdue the wife. Conquer. Think Neanderthal here. So you're gonna subdue the wife, conquer the wife. And the woman's gonna desire the man. That word there is used in Genesis, chapter four, verse seven where it says that sin – the Lord says to Cain:

Sin is crouching at the door and desires you.

And the connotation there is that sin wants to control you, to manipulate you. And so here the Lord is saying that because humans are now alienated from God and because you're under the bondage of the serpent, the oppression of the principalities and powers, this marriage that could have been so wonderful is now going to be reduced to a power struggle where the man, because they tend to be stronger, is going to be subduing the wife, but the wife then, because she can't compete then, usually at a physical level, then she's gonna have to be using her brain on how to get her way. She's gonna desire the man to control the man. And now we're back to the clip where the guy is the head, but the wife has positioned herself to be the neck that turns the head. And if you're gonna do it in a wise way, you can't let the head know that you're doing it. You want the head to think that it doesn't have a neck. And so you say, oh, honey, honey, you're the boss. Meantime, go do this. You plant the ideas and give him the credit for it. But, sadly, that's how it's been throughout history. To varying degrees it's been this power struggle of everyone trying to get their way by controlling the other.

Jesus comes and he inaugurates the kingdom in which there is no male nor female. Jesus comes and he inaugurates the kingdom in which people don't find their identity and, therefore, don't have any allegiance to anything else other than *Abba* father and doing his will and that changes the way we do everything. All of our relationships, Paul says, fall into... let's look at this, he says:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Why? Because you're gonna do *Abba's* will. Do nothing out of selfish ambition.

Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interest of the others. In your relationships with one another...

Note there, there's no qualification. In *all* your relationships with one another...

Have the same attitude of mind that Christ Jesus had...

And then Paul goes on to talk about what that attitude was in Philippians two. He says that Jesus Christ, though he was in the form of God, by nature God, he had all the power, he had all the prerogatives, and yet he emptied himself of all of that. He divested of the power and the privileges to become a human being and then to become a servant of humanity and then to die on a cross. That's the mindset we're to have in all of our relationships. Not this selfish ambition trying to get control trying to get our way but rather doing what Jesus did. Having the mindset of a self-sacrificial servant, putting the interest of others above our own. All of our relationships, all man to man relationships, all man to female relationships, all female to female relationships, all relationships which include of course marriage relationships, marriage is a relationship. All of it is to be characterized by the attitude that was displayed by Jesus Christ. And see that then blows sky high this fallen paradigm of marriage, the Adam paradigm of marriage, the cursed paradigm of marriage where everyone's trying to get their way out of selfish ambition. The man doing it through physical strength, the woman doing through her cleverness, it blows that whole paradigm apart, because now the husband and wife are to be seeking the interest of each other, esteeming and valuing others above themselves, submitting to one another, serving one another, completely the opposite of what we see in Genesis 3:16. Submitting to one another. Paul says this explicitly. And the plot thickens a little bit more here. Paul says this explicitly in Ephesians five. To the husband and to the wife:

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Out of reverence for Christ, following the example of Christ, who is our Lord, we submit to one another. The husband submits to the wife and the wife submits to the husband. This word that used for submit is ὑποτάσσω (hypotassō) and it means to place yourself under or to be subject to. Now, here's what it does not mean. I want to be clear on this right from the get-go. It does not mean to subject yourself to another, to submit to another does not mean you enable them to go on in their dysfunctions. It does not mean that you allow the person to walk all over you. It does not mean that you allow someone to be abusive towards you. Our model in everything is Jesus Christ. We always look to him, right? We're to imitate him. So look at how Jesus was submissive, how he did hypotassō. Sometimes, when it was loving hypotassō meant he bled, he died on the cross. Alright? So, love does that. But other times, Christ was very confrontational. You look at how he interacted with the Pharisees and the Sadducees and some of the religious

leaders. It wasn't really Mickey Mouse type, no he got big, he got huge, he got angry with them, he called them vipers. Brood of vipers and he says, you blind leaders of the blind, he used shocking words because that's what they needed. You see, in this case it wasn't loving for them to go on in their religious deception and self-righteousness leading other people into that bondage. It wasn't loving to let them do that so he confronts them. Now he's still coming under them, hypotassō, he's still standing under them, he's got their interests in mind, he still loves them, but now love doesn't look like meekness at all, love looks like confrontation because that's what they needed. So also, in all of our relationships we're to be doing hypotassō, coming under others, but sometimes love looks like bleeding and sacrifice and suffering, even, but sometimes love looks like confrontation and sometimes love looks like walking away. I'm speaking mainly to women, but sometimes it applies to men. If you're in a relationship where you're being walked on and it's the Adam paradigm and you're being subdued and maybe being abused, it's not loving to let the man go on doing that. It's not loving to him, it's not loving to you and if there's kids involved it's not loving to them. No, here's where love needs to confront and if that confrontation doesn't work you bring others in to confront and sometimes in extreme cases, love means walking away because maybe that's the only way that they're gonna get it. You follow me on this? Now, every situation's different, so you have to, in every situation pray about what God's will is in that situation. What does love look like in this situation. And it's good to have other people and their eyes and discernment involved in your situation. But the point is that hypotassō does not mean mousey meekness all the time. Sometimes it's confrontation and sometimes walking away. Having said that, I can't possibly exaggerate to you how radical, how wild it is for a first century, male, Jewish person like Paul to be telling other people – men – in the first century, patriarchal culture to submit to their wives. To say, wives submit to your husbands, that makes sense. But husbands submit to your wives? In a first-century context that is absolutely bizarre. It's radical. In fact, it'd be subversive because they thought, in fact, early Christians were known as undermining family values for this reason. The whole structure of society hangs on the man. And now here Paul is saying husbands and wives submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, it's radical. It's wild, to say to wives and *husbands*, you esteem the other person above yourselves. Wives and *husbands* you submit to one another. Wives and *husbands*, you put off selfish ambition, don't seek your own will. Wives and *husbands* come under one another, hypotassō one another. Value one another above yourself. To say it to wives, that was normal. To say it husbands, whoa. That's radical. And so you see how the kingdom completely reverses the Adam paradigm? The Genesis fall curse paradigm that we saw in Genesis 3:16? In the fall, here's the diagram, in the fall you have got the husband trying to have authority over the wife, the wife then tries to control the husband. Those arrows represent trying to have control over one another. They're not like, playing bows and arrows here. It's a game of leap frog where everyone's trying to control everybody because they have selfish ambition, they want to get their way, but in the kingdom it goes in the exact

opposite direction, where the husband come under the wife. And then the wife comes under the husband. There's this servant attitude. Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. That applies to marriage as much as it applies to any other relationship. Where you're coming under one another saying, how can I serve, how can I value you, how can I esteem you above myself. There is a humility that is there. And see, now, kingdom marriages, rather than being power struggles become displays of Christ-like love. Now our marriages should be putting on display to the world, what does it look like when a brother and sister in Christ, because remember you're brothers and sisters in Christ before you're spouses, and so, what does it look like when two people have their whole allegiance to *Abba* father and are seeking to carry out *Abba* father's will? What does it look like when two people who are married are free from all the silly distinctions and identities and allegiances of the world? What does it look like when two people now put on display the character of Christ and have the mindset of Christ and are no longer seeking selfish ambition but are seeking to serve one another? And that folks is one of *Abba's* wills for marriages, to put on display his character and his love that he revealed on Calvary.

Now, it gets a little thicker. Okay? Follow this. That's the ideal for kingdom marriages. That's the ideal. But the kingdom always comes to people and always comes to cultures as they are. There's no other way to do it. You gotta come to where people are and to where cultures are. The kingdom, Jesus said, is like a mustard seed that gets planted in person and planted in a culture. It starts of very small but it grows and it grows and it grows and it gradually takes over the whole garden. It gradually takes over the whole person. It will someday take over the culture. It will someday take over the world. That's the kingdom growing. But it doesn't happen all at once. It takes a while to change people and a while to change cultures. So what you find in the New Testament is the mustard seed of the kingdom pushing at and subverting the categories of the world. All right? You find it's a mixture of both. The kingdom in a cultural context transforming the culture and then transforming the people in the culture. And so, when the kingdom comes in the first century, it has to come and be expressed in the categories that are already there. Are you following me on this? It's gotta be planted in the structures of the society as it finds it in order to push those structures out and eventually subvert it. So Paul has to adopt the language of the culture and the categories of the culture in order to instruct people on how to begin to live differently than the culture. Are you following me on this? Are you following me on this? Okay. Keep your thinking caps on so you can see this. You can see this when you look, when you look at the rest of Ephesians five. It's absolutely brilliant the way Paul does this. Okay. So let's go back to the 'submit to one another' verse and then we'll read what follows from it. First, Paul says:

Submit (hypotassō) to one another out of reverence for Christ.

It applies to both. Then he says:

Wives, [submit yourselves] to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

Now, I put 'submit yourselves' in verse twenty-two in brackets because they're not in the Greek. Those are inserted in almost all the translations. But there's a significance in the fact that they're not in the Greek and here's what it is: Paul says in the original Greek, husbands and wives submit yourselves, one to another, in reverence to Christ. Then he says, wives to your husbands. And then later on he's gonna go husbands to your wives. What it shows is that the 'submission' clause applies equally to husbands and wives, they just do it differently because they're in different positions because of the culture they live in. So Paul is first gonna talk to the wives because they're already submitting, they have no choice. And then he's gonna talk to the husbands. So he says this: submit yourselves to one another out of reverence to Christ. Wives, here's how you do it. Husbands, here's how you do it. So let's look at what he says to the wives. He says:

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

I thought a man would say Amen to that. For crying out loud. Okay, look it. If you take that verse out of context, which it almost always is, if you take it out of context, it looks like Paul is reverting right back to the Adam paradigm. Right? It looks like he's saying, yep, the husband's the boss. As though he forgot that two verses earlier he said submit to one another. If you take that verse out of context, you gotta be wondering, what about all that stuff he just said in Philippians two where we're all to have the mind of Christ, we're all to esteem the other person above ourselves, we're all to be servants, we're all to put off selfish ambition. What about all that? It looks like Paul's contradicting himself if you take this verse out of context. If you don't take it out of context, you'll see that that's not what he's doing at all. He is speaking in the categories of the culture but he is subverting them, it's brilliant, it's ingenious the way he does this. Okay, so, wives, here how you do it. You actually already do it that way, they are already submitting. He's gonna bring something to it. Then he turns and speaks to the husband, who, in the first century, has all the power. So he says this:

Husbands,

Here's how you submit.

Love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her (by the water) with water through the word...

So, right after telling wives to submit, Paul turns to the husbands and says, husbands, you love your wives as Christ loved the church. How did Christ love the church? He gave himself up. This is the ultimate hypotassō. He set aside all of his divine power and became a servant. He came under the church. Husbands, this is how you're to submit. In the first century, you've got all power. What are you gonna do with it? And Paul is saying set it aside and serve your wife as Christ set aside his power and his privileges to serve his wife, the bride of Christ. And husbands, notice this, speaking to husbands now, Christ gave his life for us, for the church to make her holy and to cleanse her. In other words, Christ gave his life for the church when she was unholy and when she was dirty, which means if we're to love like that, we don't get to decide whether they deserve it or not. Even if we think they don't deserve it. Even if she's unholy, even if she's dirty, even if she's nagging you... Christ calls you to submit and to lay down your life and bleed for your wife. This is how husbands are to submit. It's brilliant the way he does this. Put on the mind of Christ and it transforms everything. And I suspect that there might be a man listening to this somewhere out there in the podcast world who's getting irritated with me right now and wants to beat me up right now. But I just want to speak to you and say it could be that I'm challenging an allegiance that you have and an identity that you have that in the kingdom you shouldn't be having. So let it go and be nice to me. All right.

So do you see what Paul's doing? He's brilliant. He speaks to the wife. They're already submitting, they don't have a choice. So when Paul says, submit yourself to the husband, that's nothing new, the culture was already doing that. What's new is that Paul says, do it unto the Lord. What's new is that Paul saying, do it willingly. Do it in a way that's not manipulative. Do it in a way that's manifesting the love of Christ. That's new, that's radical, the kingdom. And then when Paul says to the husband, you know, you're the head. In the first century culture, you're in the position where Christ is over the church. You got all the power, that's not new. To say, you're the head, that's not new. That's just cultural, everyone already knew that. What's new and beautiful and radical is what Paul says to do with that. What are you gonna do with all that power? You gonna be the boss? Gonna have that tie-breaking vote? Paul says, no don't do what Adam did. Lord over, rule over, subdue. No, don't do it like Adam did, do it like Christ did. Have the mind of Christ. What did Christ do? Had all that power, had all that privilege, set it aside, emptied himself of it to become a servant to win over the love of his spouse, the bride of Christ. That's the relationship that husbands and wives are supposed to have in the kingdom and it's beautiful. Mutual submission. Mutual service to one another. Mutual manifestation of the mind of Christ. Setting aside selfish ambition. So the question is this. I'm gonna do a little exercise here. It applies to marriage it applies to all of our relationships. If it helps you to close your eyes as I do this exercise, that's fine, if not, that's fine too. Right now ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you – husbands, wives, single folks – to reveal to you ways in which you have been operating out of the fallen paradigm. You've been operating out of selfish ambition. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you ways in which you try to get your way in relationships. Ways that maybe you try

to control or manipulate, connive, strategies that you have for getting your way. Holy Spirit reveal this to us. For some it might be using your loud voice to intimidate. Holy Spirit reveal this to us. For some it might be, you just stop talking and you know that you'll eventually win. For some it might be you start crying, that's how you get your way. For some it might be the intimidation of their physical strength. How do you get your way? Holy Spirit reveal this to us. How do we operate out of the old paradigm? Just get a picture of that. Let the Holy Spirit reveal it. Lord, help us to be honest with ourselves. How do we manipulate? How do we control. And then we you see that in your life, will you do this: turn and repent of it, repent. That just means you turn from it. Turn from it. Because you know that that's not the kingdom. And then let the Lord give you a picture of what does it look like when you don't do that? What do you look like when you're not trying to manipulate or connive or get your way or control? In your marriage relationship, in your friendship relationships, maybe in your work relationships. Holy Spirit reveal this to us. Sometimes it's so hard to see this stuff because we've always done it. Holy Spirit reveal this to us. We need to let it go and grab hold of the true you. The true you, the you that you are in the kingdom. The you that doesn't need to be controlling. Hmm. Holy Spirit reveal this to us. Best way. Best way. And then let's ask the Holy Spirit to empower us to live that way. See it, that's the true you, now commit to living that way. Ask the Lord to empower you to go in the direction, to live that way. Yes Lord, empower us. To have the mind of Christ. To find the joy of serving one another. To be free of the need to manipulate and control.

You know I was going to, when I initially thought about this message, I thought about having five practical tips on how to build a strong marriage, six practical tips on how to work through conflict in a productive way; I would just rather it now, because this is so foundational I want just to get the paradigm of it. But in reality you could not get a more on marriage or on just relationships in general than the one you just got. The reality is, is that if we have the mind of Christ in a marriage, you're gonna be working toward a beautiful marriage, if you put this into practice, you're gonna be moving in the direction of a beautiful marriage. Wherever you are now, it's gonna go in the right direction. If two people start esteeming the other above themselves, valuing the other above themselves, putting the other's interest above themselves, you're gonna be moving in the directions of the kingdom, Christ-like, beautiful marriage, it's the most practical thing in the world. And if two people commit to having all their allegiance to *Abba* father, and all their identity in *Abba* father and letting go of all of our little idols, if you people are doing that you're gonna be moving towards a beautiful marriage and you're gonna find ways of working through conflict, because conflicts are gonna be there, I don't care who you are or how old you are, you're gonna have conflicts, but they'll be productive if the two people always keep in mind that their job is to always put on display the character of *Abba* father. The thing that erodes marriages, the things that make conflicts seem insurmountable is people are operating out of the old Adam paradigm. We start trying out of selfish ambition, we'll start trying to get our way, we have priorities that come in front of *Abba's* will. That's

what erodes marriages and makes conflicts seem unbearable. But when we commit to just being Christians, being Christ-like, it's that simple. Husbands Christ-like to your wives, wives Christ-like to your husbands, friends Christ-like to your friends, and then being Christ-like even to your enemies. When we do that, that puts on display the beauty of the kingdom, Amen? The beauty of the kingdom.

Radical stuff, radical stuff. Beautiful stuff. The kingdom changes everything.

Okay, I want to end this way. I'm gonna end with a prayer and, as I do, I want to invite the prayer team to come forward and if you are here and you have any need whatsoever that you'd like to have prayer for, whether it's your marriage issue or your single issue or any other issue, I encourage you to come forward and talk to these folks, pray with these folks. Everything you share will be held in confidence. But I'd like to end it with a prayer this way: if you're married, whether your spouse is here today or not, would you please stand up and I want all the single people just to get around these married folks. I want you to just look around and pick out in your mind, two or three married folks, look back so the people in the back are covered, look up front so the people up front are covered. Pick out a few of these folks standing here and let's pray for them because Lord knows we need prayer for marriages, man marriages are under attack.

Holy Spirit, we right now -

If you want to even raise your hand towards the people you're praying for, that's fine, too.

Holy Spirit, we pray right now, in Jesus' name, for all the families and marriages that are represented here in this auditorium right now. Holy Spirit, we pray that you would clothe their marriage in Christ Jesus, that you'd clothe each one of them in Christ Jesus. Holy Spirit we pray that you would just baptize them in the spirit of Jesus. Baptize them in the spirit that finds joy in sacrificing for one another. Baptize them, Lord God, in that power to let go of selfish ambition. Baptize them, Lord, in the esteem one another above themselves. Holy Spirit we pray protection around all these families because there's an enemy that wants to get in there and erode and bring in this tyranny of manipulation and control that's been there from the fall. We stand against the enemy, we declare victory over the enemy, we rebuke the enemy in Jesus' name on behalf of every family represented in this auditorium. And Lord we just pray that you would just invade these families, Lord God, empower them with your love, help them to rekindle the flame if it's been dying, Lord God, let it burn more brightly. God we just pray that each of these families would put on display that character of Jesus Christ. What it looks like for a brother and sister to be free of all the silly idolatry of the world, all the identities of the world, the allegiances of the world, the hostility of the world, but to live

in the beautiful identity of being kingdom kids. Who carry out their marriages and everything else in their life going about their Father's will on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name we pray and all God's people said, Amen.

God bless you guys! Go out and build the kingdom!

Amen.