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Sermon Notes

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Husbands, Love Your Wives!

Ephesians 5:25-33

Few books in the Bible make so very clear how dark the non-Christian world is as does this little book of Ephesians. We have already learned that unbelievers are enslaved to their lusts and to the invisible spiritual power of Satan, serving the pattern of rebellion in this world. We have seen that they are by nature objects of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3), and cannot escape Satan's dungeon, nor God's wrath, by themselves. We have also seen that non-Christians are "without hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12) And that they are living life dominated by minds of darkness, thinking empty futile thoughts, fulfilling their lustful desires, walking in darkness because they are the essence of darkness. (Ephesians 4:17-19) Paul has also been very clear that all of us at one time were exactly like that, but that we were rescued from that dark empire of Satan by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, we are called on to be light in the Lord:

Ephesians 5:8-9 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)

This corrupt world we live in needs the light of the gospel desperately:

Isaiah 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

We are called on to SHINE CHRIST'S LIGHT in this dark world:

Matthew 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world.

Philippians 2:15-16 a crooked and depraved generation, ... you shine like stars in the universe ¹⁶ as you hold out the word of life

One of the number one ways we can PUT THE LIGHT OF CHRIST ON DISPLAY is in our Christian marriages! Perhaps nowhere is the darkness of the non-Christian life so obvious as in the wretched state of many homes and non-Christian marriages... so much rage, anger, unforgiveness, abuse, neglect, immorality, impurity, selfishness, materialism, pride, and corruption is on display in the non-Christian homelife...

This is a unique opportunity for us to LIVE OUT the mystery of the gospel... for in Ephesians 5, we learn that every Christian marriage is a DISPLAY of the gospel in detail, for marriage pictures Christ and the church

Last week, we spoke at length about the wife's role—godly submission to her husband's God-ordained headship. This week, we will see how a godly husband can put Christ's sacrificial love for the church on display by the way he loves and serves his wife...

Ephesians 5:25-33 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

The world desperately needs godly Christian men to step up by the Spirit and live out these words...

First and foremost, this has evangelistic power in the lives of your children, for they are watching everything you say and do...

But beyond this, every Christian marriage can be a light shining in a neighborhood, a community, a city, a nation, and a world... the clearest

display of the gospel lived out in everyday life that any non-Christian can ever see

I. The Command: Husbands, Love Your Wives!

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives

A. This is the basic command... LOVE YOUR WIVES

1. Perhaps surprising, because men get married because we love the woman we're marrying
2. But Martin Luther called that newlywed love like drunken joy; it is irrational and short-lived; soon, you will wake up and the wine will have worn off and you're left with this woman and now comes the real deal... will you love the REAL PERSON you married

Stanley Hauerwas: "The (faulty) assumption is that there is someone just right for us to marry and that if we look closely enough we will find the right person. This moral assumption overlooks a crucial aspect to marriage. It fails to appreciate the fact that we always marry the wrong person.

We never know whom we will marry; we just think we do. Or even if we first marry the right person, just give it a while and he or she will change. For marriage being the enormous thing it is means we are not the same person after we have entered it. The primary problem is... learning how to love and care for the stranger whom you married."

3. We need to be COMMANDED to love our wives because biblical love is the most challenging thing our sinful, selfish, depraved hearts could ever do

Genuine love does not at all come naturally to us, but must be worked in us supernaturally by Christ

4. As Christians, the command to love should not surprise us... for it is a subset of the two great commandments:

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

A husband is going to be called to "Love his wife as himself..." (Ephesians 5:28); this is almost identical language to the second great command; in effect, the wife is the husband's nearest "neighbor" that he should love as himself.

5. This is the very thing the indwelling Spirit works in us... obedience to God's Law
6. The husband's love for his wife is a part of the Spirit-filled life for him, like her submission to him is for her

Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Ephesians 5:18 be filled with the Spirit

The commands here for the husband are so impossible for sinners to fulfill that only if the man is a genuine Christian, redeemed by faith in the blood of Christ, and only if the man is continually filled with the Holy Spirit, will he be able to live consistently under these soaring expectations

B. The Command is... LOVE YOUR WIVES!

1. My definition of love really had its start here in Ephesians 5:25-30:

Love is heart attraction resulting in cheerful sacrificial action

2. Heart attraction = you find your personal delight in bringing joy to your wife
3. John Piper makes a strong case for marriage in his book on Christian Hedonism called *Desiring God*; in his lengthy chapter on love, he proved that love MUST involve PERSONAL DELIGHT in the BLESSING of another

- a. He argues that if we don't truly enjoy serving the other person, it isn't really love
- b. True love involves a HEART ATTRACTION to a person, yearning to see them happy, pleased, healthy, blessed in any and every way

“God loves a CHEERFUL giver”

“It is more blessed to give than to receive”

- c. Piper argues that genuine love must flow from a deeply interested heart—“I am personally delighted to bless you, give to you...”
 - d. Well this is EVEN MORE TRUE when it comes to a husband with his wife... he should find his highest and greatest earthly pleasure in bringing delight to his wife
4. Because this is a COMMAND that can and must be obeyed, and because some people say “I can't help how I FEEL”, they say LOVE IS AN ACTION, NOT AN EMOTION... LOVE IS A CHOICE OF THE WILL
 5. But that is only partly true... if there is no cherishing, no delighting, then there's no love... and if there are no ACTIONS, there's no love

C. Vastly Beyond the Initial Fireworks of Romance

1. The command may seem strange to those just falling in love... or to newlyweds
2. “Why do you have to be COMMANDED to love your wife? If you do, there's something WRONG!” They would say...
3. Well, there IS something wrong... with BOTH OF US... SIN NATURE
4. You see the actual sin patterns in BOTH of you... perhaps she is fastidiously neat and scolds you when you leave your things on the bedroom floor; perhaps she is shy and quiet, and initially you thought that was attractive, but now you find it annoying; perhaps

you are seeing some passive aggressive tendencies in her, or she is more and more bold to confront you about things she thinks you should change

5. So here's the command: LOVE HER!!! HEART ATTRACTION LEADING TO DELIGHTED SACRIFICIAL ACTION
6. No one has ever displayed that more perfectly than Jesus Christ in his overwhelmingly costly sacrifice for his bride, the Church

II. The First Pattern for a Husband's Love: Christ's Love for the Church

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

A. The Pattern for the Husband's Love: Christ's Sacrifice for the Church

1. Jesus spoke quite directly about love and sacrifice

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

2. Christ delighted to lay down his life for his bride... it was for JOY that he did it
3. The cost was IMMEASURABLE, but the ultimate glory of what He's done will make it all worthwhile

B. Like Jacob and David

1. There is a biblical pattern of a young man WINNING THE RIGHT to marry a woman he loves
2. It is a measure of manhood to earn the right to take a man's daughter... often in that culture it involved the payment of a BRIDE-PRICE
3. Jacob had to work for Laban for SEVEN YEARS to win the right to marry Rachel

Genesis 29:20 So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

4. 1 Samuel 18: David had to go out as a warrior and kill one hundred Philistines to win the right to marry Saul's daughter, Michal... he actually DOUBLED it and killed two hundred!
5. Jesus had to go destroy the devil and his kingdom, and appease the wrath of God for the right to win his bride the Church!!

C. Christ Gave Himself Up at the Cross

Ephesians 5:25-26 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy

1. This is speaking obviously and directly of Christ's BLOOD ATONEMENT for the Church at the cross

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins

2. Jesus SHED HIS BLOOD for the church to MAKE HER HOLY...
3. This is the INFINITE sacrifice of love, the ultimate pattern for a husband to follow for his wife...

D. Christ Gave Himself Up for the BENEFIT of the Church

1. eternity in immeasurable blessing in the New Heaven and New Earth
2. The Church's every blessing was BLOOD-BOUGHT by her husband, Jesus Christ!
3. This was the MEASURE of his love for His church...

Song of Solomon 8:6 Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.

Jesus' love for the church BLAZED IN HOLY ZEAL to the point that it was STRONGER THAN DEATH! He drank down death to its dregs and rose triumphant from the grave to win an eternal

love affair with the Church... his love for her was TRULY stronger than death!

E. Christ Gave Himself Up for HIS OWN DELIGHT in the Church

1. We'll talk more about this in a moment, but Jesus did it to MAKE HIMSELF happy too

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

2. Christ looked beyond the CROSS to the joy and the glory of redeeming his bride
 - a. It was HIS OWN JOY that he saw... that was the JOY SET BEFORE HIM... the joy of having people from every nation and culture on earth redeemed and in heaven with him
 - b. Yes it was also the JOY of the bride... a perfectly SHARED joy
 - c. For that SHARED JOY, Jesus laid down his life for his wife
3. This shows that the LAYING DOWN was by no means EASY...
 - a. In Gethsemane, Jesus sweat great drops of blood when he more fully understood the cup of God's wrath he would have to drink
 - b. It was an INFINITELY COSTLY bride-price
 - c. So husbands also... COSTLY sacrifice

Luke 9:23 Then Jesus said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

F. Practical Application

1. The idea of "giving yourself up" is the hardest thing you can ever do in a marriage
2. The essence of the flesh is a fanatical commitment to SELF... we are born and bred to be fiercely selfish

3. Christ's death on the cross teaches all husbands to lay down their lives for their wives
 - a. This means to think consistently "What would MOST bless my wife?"
 - b. It means to deny your own selfish interests... your pleasures... and find your pleasure in her pleasure
 - c. It certainly involves HARD WORK—breadwinning so that you create a safe haven where she can flourish; so being faithful to hold down a sufficient job; but it also means denying yourself and working around the house or whatever needs to be done to present her a stress-free home life

Genesis 2:15 "The Lord God put the man in the garden to SERVE and PROTECT it..."

- d. But to LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE means more than that...
- e. I think about costly hobbies... spending all day golfing or hunting or fishing or watching multiple sporting events on TV... all the while, your marriage grows more and more distant
- f. I think about when you come home exhausted at the end of a long day and she wants to TALK and you want to CHILL...
- g. It means to learn things that please her and bring her fulfillment and investing your heart in them too... communication, gifts, dates, acts of service, words of affection, hand holding, tender moments of cherishing...
- h. And it HAS to be genuinely pleasing to you—or your wife will not feel loved

III. The First Goal of a Husband's Love: The Wife's Radiant Holiness

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

A. Christ Laid Down His Life to Make the Church RADIANTLY HOLY

1. Christ had the final perfection of his bride in mind
2. He wanted her pure, clean, holy, beautiful in radiant glory
3. He found her FILTHY, DEFILED, CORRUPTED, ENSLAVED to sin, repulsive in every way
4. How different is this from us husbands... when we first saw our future wives, we were almost certainly deeply powerfully attracted to her; her beauty captivated you; you couldn't get her out of your mind;
 - a. This is not a bad thing! That's how it was with Jacob and Rachel... the moment he saw her, his heart was powerfully knit to her
 - b. God has crafted the beauty of a woman in her youth to be a powerfully attractive thing to a young man
5. But Jesus found his church in a very different state... for he could LOOK TO HER TRUE NATURE... truly, deeply, pervasively corrupt—sinful to the core

***Ephesians 2:1-3* Dead in sin... following Satan... enslaved to wickedness and idols... disobedient... gratifying lusts... objects of wrath**

***Ephesians 2:12* without hope and without God in the world.**

***Ephesians 5:8* you were once darkness**

6. Ezekiel 16: A powerful passage from Ezekiel captures it well... picturing how God found Israel in her sin, like finding a repulsive baby girl by the side of the road kicking in her blood... ugly, despised, rejected... God passed by, chose her, caused her to live, cared for her; watched her grow into womanhood, clothed her with royal robes, made her beautiful, married her
7. So, Jesus found us REPLUSIVE, and gave himself up on the cross to make us HOLY, radiant, beautiful... and so we shall be in eternity!!

Revelation 21:2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

Revelation 21:9-11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

8. Jesus has an immeasurable zeal for the holiness of His Bride:

Isaiah 62:1 For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.

9. Look at the words carefully, verses 26-27...

- a. Jesus gave himself for the church TO MAKE HER HOLY.. that is totally conformed to God's nature, free from all SIN, all stains, all blemishes, anything that would mar her radiance
- b. He WASHED HER WITH WATER THROUGH THE WORD... the Word of the Gospel cleansed her conscience, and her heart by faith; the Word then sanctified the church and made her progressively holier

B. "In This Same Way... HUSBANDS..."

1. Paul makes a very strong connection to the role of the husbands with their wives
2. No, husbands are not called on to die an atoning death for their wives; Jesus has already done that, ONCE FOR ALL TIME
3. BUT there is a similarity...
 - a. the Christian wife is NOT DONE BEING SAVED yet; she has been justified by faith, but there is an ongoing work of sanctification that needs to happen in the wife's heart
 - b. The greatest way a husband can love his wife is by helping her grow in Christ
 - c. SANCTIFICATION: "making her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word"

i) So the husband should be pouring the Word into his wife...

C. "To Present Her to Himself as a Radiant Church"

1. The husband's ultimate goal is to present his wife to her TRUE HUSBAND, Christ
2. Paul spoke of his ministry of the Word to the Corinthians in exactly these terms:

2 Corinthians 11:2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

3. Husbands, your marriage to your wife is TEMPORARY; her perfect marriage to Christ as part of the Church is ETERNAL
4. Yet... you will benefit from this immensely!
 - a. The more your wife grows in her Christlikeness, the better a wife she will be to you
 - b. So, like Christ is with the church, you will also be presenting TO YOURSELF a radiant wife
 - c. This is exactly what Paul meant when he said

Ephesians 5:28 He who loves his wife loves himself.

A husband pours himself into ministry for his wife's growth so that they will enjoy the best possible marriage on earth; AND eternally, that they will maximally glorify Christ in heaven!

D. Practically:

1. Husbands: learn the Bible really well... become the pastor of your family!
2. Share scripture daily with your wife!
3. Set spiritual goals for your marriage... ways for both of you to grow
4. Meet regularly with your wife, to study scripture together

5. Wash her with water through the word!

IV. The Second Pattern for a Husband's Love: His Love for Himself

Ephesians 5:28-30 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- ³⁰ for we are members of his body.

A. Paul Gives Husbands a Second Pattern to Love Your Wife

1. First: love your wife like Christ loves the church in dying for her
2. Second: love your wife like you love your own body
 - a. This is extremely practical and easily understood
 - b. It shows the physical and daily life nature of biblical marriage

B. Basic Premise: Husbands... You Already DO Love Your Own Bodies!

Ephesians 5:29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it

1. Here Paul is speaking a truism... men consistently look after the needs of their own bodies
2. As a matter of fact, it has been your relentless concern since you were infants
 - a. When you are hungry, you feed yourself
 - b. When you weary, you lie down and rest
 - c. When you are in pain, you do whatever you can to alleviate that pain
 - d. When you have an itch, you scratch it!
 - e. It is literally impossible to catalogue all the ways you have loved your body by meeting its needs every waking hour of all the decades you've been alive

3. This now has become the PATTERN for how you love your wife
 - a. The moment you were married, you became “one flesh”

Ephesians 5:31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

- b. What this means is that you should now extend the same kind of constant concern for happiness, health, delight, pleasure, freedom from pain to your wife’s body that you do to your own body
- c. His bread-winning is no longer for himself alone, but to share everything he earns with the wife he loves
- d. I’ve seen this with some amazing elderly godly couples... the husband has been loving his wife in such a selfless and godly way that when she became chronically ill, he gave up his days every day to care for her needs; when she was in pain, it was as if he felt it in his own body

C. Christ Also Does This for the Church

1. The physical, practical nature of this care should not be minimized
2. Nor should we miss how Christ does this for his Church
3. Every meal we ever eat, every healing we ever experience is BLOOD-BOUGHT and ministered to us directly by Christ

Ephesians 5:29-30 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--³⁰ for we are members of his body.

V. The Second Goal of a Husband’s Love: The Wife’s Healthy Delight

A. The Goal of This: The Husband Lives for the Wife’s Healthy PHYSICAL Delight as Much as For His Own

1. He has so linked their hearts that he cannot live for his own pleasure any longer
2. He finds his delight completely wrapped up in her well-being

3. He loves his wife's body as he loves his own
- B. The Two Goals are Now Obvious: Washing the Wife's Soul; Caring for the Wife's Body... Like Christ Comprehensively Meets Every Need of the Church
- C. This is the Way a Husband Loves His Wife Completely
1. He seeks ultimately all of his joy as a shared experience of joy and delight
 2. He is no longer selfish... but lives to make the wife happy

Deuteronomy 24:5 If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.

- D. This Happiness is BOTH Spiritual and Physical... a Full Blessedness

VI. The Timeless Mystery of Marriage: Christ and the Church

Ephesians 5:31-32 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church.

- A. We have already covered this two weeks ago... but it is a vital reminder
- B. Husbands: whenever you love your wives with Christlike sacrifice by the power of the Spirit, you're putting the gospel on display...
ESPECIALLY TO YOUR CHILDREN!
- C. The mystery of the gospel is the PERFECT UNION between Christ and his church... the TWO BECOMING ONE...
1. Perfect unity of mind and heart... a genuine love relationship between two separate persons
 2. In heaven, we will be as one with each other as the Father and the Son are
 3. The more we can come to genuine unity now, the better

D. “One Flesh”: the absolute sacredness of marital relations... of SEX

1. The “sexual revolution” of the 1960s has permanently affected the American culture in terms of sex
2. Our culture has made sex not SACRED... it’s merely physical, of very little significance
3. This mystical analogy of a husband and wife becoming ONE FLESH a deeply mysterious picture of Christ and the Church means that there is absolutely nothing casual or insignificant about sex... it is a SACRED thing, a holy picture of Christ and the Church
4. So for all you single people, young men and young women... commit yourself to absolute purity wrt sex... as Christians, we need to have a sacred view of marital relations
5. And you married people, recommit yourself to what you vowed in your wedding: “forsaking all others, keep yourselves for your spouse only”
6. Especially be zealous in terms of the corruption of internet pornography and other depictions that will lure your hearts away from absolute purity

VII. Final Practical Commands

Ephesians 5:33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

- A. Paul finishes this amazing section by summarizing what he wants from the husband and wife... the husband must LOVE HIS WIFE AS HE LOVES HIMSELF... as we’ve already seen
- B. The wife must SEE TO IT that she respects her husband
- C. It has been noted that these quick summaries are brilliantly positioned to the weaknesses of each
 1. The husband, years into the marriage, has a hard time cherishing his wife, loving her with deep affection, courting her, wooing, her, serving her FROM THE HEART

2. The wife can do all those things, but she really struggles with respecting her imperfect husband... she is tempted to GOSSIP about his laughable flaws to her girlfriends, to mock him as Michal mocked David
 3. Respect is so hard for her to do!
- D. Other final practical commands
1. A Call to the Unconverted... this chapter speaks plainly of the gospel... and before you need anything concerning your marriage, you need a SAVIOR
 2. I want to speak to a variety of husbands to close
 - a. New husbands: perhaps in your first two years of marriage; try to establish good patterns of being a godly husband early on... good habits of prayer, encouragement, pouring God's Word into your wife's heart; learn early on how to resolve conflicts in a loving way... be quick to ask forgiveness and quick to give it; take the long view of your marriage, even though you really don't know how long you have together; cherish her... keep romancing her heart, speaking to her, assuring her of your love for her
 - b. Neglectful or lazy husbands: perhaps you've been married a while and you've become complacent in your marriage; you are passive, perhaps even a little lazy... you don't have bible and prayer times with your wife, nor do you disciple her; you let her do a lot of the spiritual formation of the children, and they don't see you as the spiritual leader in the marriage; she reads all the Christian marriage books, not you; WAKE UP! Take your God-commanded role in the marriage! Pray carefully through the verses here; ask your wife, "Do you feel loved by me?" or "What could I do to make you feel more loved?" Ask the Lord to make you more energetically engaged as a husband... ask Him by His Spirit to give you power to LOVE and LEAD and SERVE and TEACH as Christ does; remember the original call to SERVE AND PROTECT from Genesis 2:15
 - c. Resentful or bitter husbands: perhaps you have grown bitter or hardened toward your wife; or maybe she has toward you;

husband, lead the way in biblical restoration, in the giving and receiving of forgiveness; sit down and ask if there are any areas in which you need to ask forgiveness; listen carefully and be humble; and if you feel the shoe's on the other foot, that she needs to seek your forgiveness, pray and get your heart right, then gently show her her sin, just between the two of you (Matthew 19), but do it with gentleness and humility, as taking a speck of sawdust out of her eye after you removed the plank of self-righteousness from your own eye; pray together and ask God to do a work of reconciliation that will heal your marriage

3. May the Lord do a supernatural work in the marriages of our church... with the wives and the husbands each fulfilling their beautiful roles by the power of the Holy Spirit