

Ephesians 5

Sunday 6/30/2024

SEC: Introduction: The Need for Order

As we get started, let me stop one rumor that is out there. Bobby's arm did not get hurt by Katie Whipping. I'm just telling you, he told me today, "I hung in there." I bet you did.

It is good to have everybody here. If you turn with me in your Bible to the book of Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 5, that is going to be our text today. What I would like to do is talk to you about a practical side of Christianity. What I mean by that, I am talking to those that are saved, born again, a child of God, those of you that have made a major decision in life to follow the Lord. If you are here, you are somebody that also knows your Bible and believes the Bible is the Word of God.

Let me just say to those that are lost, if you are here, you are not born again, this is the closest you are ever going to get to heaven, is right here on earth. This is the best it gets. We need to realize what will happen to you in an instant, that your next place will be eternity in hell, and the word will be forever. There you will be without God, without hope, and without any more opportunities.

No matter where we are at or whatever our crowd is, we need to realize that there are people who have not made the right decision with the Lord Jesus Christ. A lot of people who believe they are saved have added Christ to their life, but they have never received Him. Coming from a Catholic background, let me just say, I know that is true. You need to realize when you are a Catholic, you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, you believe He died for your sins, you believe all those things, but it is up here. It is trying to move it down here that makes a difference. That is what changes lives.

We live in a day of Christianity that is so compromised and deluded. We have exchanged warfare for welfare. We no longer have warriors; we have whiners. We have people who do not put on the armor of God; they put on a soft robe instead. Instead of meditation, they have gone to medication. To a sword, they have exchanged that for a butter knife. The result is this: they are no longer God-centered; they are self-centered. These are the Christians.

Today I would like to talk to you about what I call the simple steps of order in life, which helped me as a young Christian. I got saved as a child and then got into my teenage years and decided to just go off and do my own thing. It was a simple little Southern Baptist church where you get saved, but you do not learn much about the Bible. I had no idea that Noah's Ark was such a boring story. How many times can you load the animals, and who has to clean out the boat? You know, those types of things.

When I rededicated my life and started all over with the Lord, I started growing in the book. I found some things that helped me, and I would hang around with Christians trying to find out these things about being spirit-filled and all of this stuff, and I could never find it out. One day, the Lord started showing me things about the word "order."

In 1 Corinthians 14:40, He says, "Let all things be done decently and in order." I know it is talking about tongues and all that, but when He puts that word "all things," He included everything.

Then I found in Psalms 119:133, it says, "Order my steps in thy word." Wow.

Psalms 37:23 says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."

When God had to deal with Hezekiah, He came down and He says, "Get your house in order."

Then Job, when he was face to face dealing with the Lord at the end, in Job 33:5, he says, "If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me." Man, this thing, "order," kept coming up.

Then I found in the Bible, there is a reverse order. In Isaiah chapter 5, the reverse order is this: where they call evil good, where they call darkness light. I started looking at this word "order," and I said, "Lord, there has got to be something about this."

Then I found over there in the Gospels where the devil tempted the Lord Jesus Christ, he did it for one reason: he tried to break the order. God had a plan of doing the right thing at the right time, but he tried to get Him to do it at the wrong time.

What I found out about order is that order gives us direction. Order gives us a pattern in life to see. Order gives us structure. It is quite simply, the opposite of order is disorder.

I found this as I started growing in the Lord: I wanted that order in my life. I found that it established the basics in my life. It created habits in me that I needed to get to. It gave me steps to be followed. It gave me patterns to fall back upon whenever I fell or felt like I was slipping. It shows us how to start over. As a Christian, you are going to have to start over several times. That is just part of it.

Without some order, we get wrong priorities. That is how so many Christians get off base. They got saved, they are sincere, they want to serve God, but all of a sudden they just get off base about things. They get wrong priorities. They also end up having a life of chaos. There is no structure in it. They end up in a state of confusion because they do not know what to do and what not to do. They feel defeated and they feel overwhelmed.

The Bible and its written word give us clear instruction and patterns. It gives us order and steps. It gives us purpose and means. The reason why we need that structure and order is because I am going to tell you here, every one of us is going to fall and then fall again. Every one of us is going to fail and fail again. Every one of us is somewhere in our Christian walk, it is just going to flop. That is part of the growing process as a Christian, but you need to understand God is more concerned, not about your flop, not about your failure, not about your fall, but are you going to get back up? That is where it is at.

I love the verse over in Proverbs 24:16. It says, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief." Think about that. But he goes on and says, "but the wicked shall fall into mischief." They go farther down.

When he says "just man," you know what he is saying there? What a just man is. He is a man that does just what is right again and again. That is what a just person is. He is a just person. He just does what is right. He has got that down in his life. It is getting back up and doing the right thing again and again. That is the difference between a just man and a wicked man. Both of them can be Christians. The just man just says, "I messed up, Lord, but I will get back up and do what is right."

I have found some people when they fall or they fail, when it happens, they do what I watch them do: they freeze. They just freeze up after falling because they just do not know where to start at. They go, "I failed. I have let the Lord down." The next step I watch them do: they run and hide because they are embarrassed. When you fail, the devil is going to highlight it to the people in the church and anybody that wants to let you know, or the lost people say, "Oh, I thought you were a Christian." And you go, "Yeah, I am."

I had a lady one time follow me out to the car and she said something to me about, "Well, you are not acting like a Christian." I said, "You are probably right, but you should have seen me when I was lost. I was much worse." You see, those things happen. That is life.

You know the next step: they freeze, and then they run and hide out of embarrassment. The next thing that comes into their life is pride. You know what pride does? Pride is always looking somewhere to assign the blame or make an excuse. Then they go, "Well, that." And oftentimes they just walk away from Christianity, feeling defeated, embarrassed. You hear these things, "I cannot do this. I just cannot live up to this. I cannot live it at all." They even get so far away that they believe that God is upset with them.

You know what the key is to it? Every time you fall, learn from it and gain more information. That is what it is all about. All of life is a lesson. You are going to see when you do not learn the lesson that God wants you to learn, you know what He says? "Repeat it." We are going to repeat it until you get it right.

You remember that person at work that just irritates you? They just get under your skin. You cannot stand them. And you go, "Fine, I will take care of that. I will quit." And you go over to this other company, and here is one twice as worse as that one. Then you go to another company, and you have another one that way. Finally, one day you go, "Hmm, maybe I better learn how to deal with this." You see, God is going to keep doing that. That is the learning process. Life is trial and error. It is a learning process. If you do not believe that, just ask somebody that has kids.

When my first kid came along, not one of my kids came with instructions. Now that is irritating. I learned the hard way. My wife would say, "Well, what do you think of this dress?" Don't tell the truth. Nobody taught me that. That was trial and error. I go, "Well, telling the truth did not work there." That is where I go, "Oh, it is whatever you think. You look good in everything, dear." That makes all the difference in the world of how your home is that night. See, that is what life is about, this trial and error. That is why we need the Bible for our instruction and our pattern.

Our source today, we are going to find it in the first church period. That first church was Ephesus. In Revelation chapter 2, it is called "fully purposed." It is a church that was founded by

the original apostles. The Apostle Paul was in Ephesus in Acts chapter 20, and then chapter 21, he goes to Jerusalem. So we see where he was at. We also find that in that same church at Ephesus that John the apostle was there, and that is where he spent his time before he was banished to the isle. Ephesus is the city where the Ephesians are at. So we are going to start at the right spot. This is the first Gentile church, which just happens to be the 10th book in your New Testament, as 10 is the number for Gentiles. This is where we are going to start.

There are two things I wanted you to get out of this today.

1. I want to show you the seven steps of order to maintain your priorities.
2. I want to show you the priorities and order of relationships.

When we were created, we were created for relationships. That is what it is all about. We need to see this as we get into it.

SEC: The Call to Wake Up

Let us begin here in these first steps, because I want you to see it. This thing is started by what I call two bookends. These two bookends start with two words. The first one is here in Ephesians 5:14, and the word is "awake." It says, "Wake up." The next one we will see in Ephesians 6:10, and it says, "Finally, my brethren." That word "finally." These are two what I call bookends.

As a young believer going through my Bible, because I was encouraged by Bob at those times to go through my Bible every 30 days, I was trying to keep up with him. I needed that because I had had so many years of psychology and philosophy from the police department, I had to get all that junk out of my head. I found these two bookends that God says, "Hey, this is a special section for you." I said, "Okay." I studied that and studied that. One day, the Lord said, "You want me to show you how to put it together?" I said, "I would love to, Lord. I would love to know it."

Let us look at this first bookend here. It starts in Ephesians 5:14.

Ephesians 5:14

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Now he is talking to a saved person, someone who knows the Lord Jesus Christ. All of a sudden right here in this chapter, he says, "Awake thou that sleepest." He is talking about somebody's spiritual condition, not their physical condition. It is very clear, unless you are dead, you are sleeping with the dead and all those things, and you are going to be in a movie later on, I can tell you. But it is not physical here; it is spiritual. Those are those believers who are sleeping through their time on earth that they are supposed to be serving the Lord.

You run into them all the time. They sit there, and I like to throw things out and see what they do and how they handle it because I am trying to wake them up, wake them up. I try to tell them that, "Do you not know Jesus is coming back? Do you not see the signs?" Why, when they announced back years ago about the UFOs that they had lied to us for all these years about UFOs, I said, "I have been teaching that in Genesis chapter 6 here, look, look, look," and trying

to get them talking. They just sit there and go, "Oh, okay." See, they have gone past the state of being indifferent. They do not have a clue. They are sound asleep. You try to wake them up. You do what you can to wake them up. These are believers that are sleeping through all of this time.

Again, the instructions here are very clear. He says in this verse, first, you are to wake up. Next, you are to arise. It means get up. My kids would say, "I would say time to get up." And they go, "Mm-hmm." My granddaughter does that all the time. "Yeah, I am up." "Yeah, I can tell, Eva." Then she is like the, you know, the walking dead. She walks out, and I go, "Wait, top of the morning to you, my lassie." And she will go, "Grandfather, don't talk to me." And her head turns and stuff like that. You see, she is showing me what it is like with these sleeping Christians.

He says, "You rise. You have got to get up." He says, "You need to separate from those that are spiritually dead." And Christ, look what it says, "Christ shall give thee light." That is something God says, "If you wake up, you get up. I will give you the light to show you what to do." Wow. This is a book that is so simple to show us step by step in the order that we need to follow.

Let me just tell you, when it comes to the dead, there are two groups. The first are people who are saved. They are spiritually dead by choice. They have made a decision somewhere. Either they have gotten hurt, they have gotten embarrassed, or they are just not energetic about anything in life. And they are dead. Then you have the unsaved. They are naturally dead by their position. The Bible says they were dead in trespasses and sin. What you see here, he is talking about sleepwalkers. You see the zombie movies? These are these kind of people. They are sleepwalkers. They are just walking around, groaning and moaning. That is the way their Christian life is. The movies are just highlighting it for us to see. They all say, "Look, it is for their next prey," and just keep going on. It is to illustrate what is happening to us.

The real key is in Proverbs 13:20. The Bible says very clear, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." If you are hanging with the dead, you will be destroyed. You will be destroyed spiritually, and it will cost you in eternity. Because at the judgment seat of Christ, you will be embarrassed. You will be hurt.

I remember one time when I went to Ethiopia, because I prayed over and over. The first guy got saved in the Bible like me was in Ethiopia. I had to meet him. I just had to meet him. I went there, and this guy's name was Testify. Testify was a young kid. He was about 12 years old, and he found a World War II land mine. It blew this arm off and part of these fingers, and he was totally blind. You know what that guy did? He had five churches going. When he was in the hospital as a kid, a missionary witnessed to him and helped him get healed, and he had five churches going.

When I waited to meet him, I am waiting here outside his factory that he worked a full-time job, and here he comes down the street blind with his wife leading him, and they had three kids. I thought I was really doing something for God. I just sat there in the corner, bawled like a baby. I thought, "God, if you could use a guy with one arm and three fingers and blind, what could you do with me?" You see, we think we have it all together in America, and then you read some guy like that. I said, "Now I know why the Ethiopian was the first one, because look at this man's

life." You see, those things wake you up. It wakes you up to your Christianity, and it makes you see these things.

A companion of fools shall be destroyed. Your fellowship will sink you every time. Look what he says in Ephesians 5:15. Remember, Christ has given you light.

Ephesians 5:15

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

He is talking about it, and he talks about your walk. He is talking about your daily life, your activity. He is not talking to you about witnessing, handing out tracts, or doing anything. He is just saying, "You know what you do every day?" He says, "Walk circumspectly." "Well, Lord, how will I know that?" He says, "Don't you know I gave you two key words, wise and fool?" He says, "By comparing wise and the fool."

It is almost like it is a reference to the book of Proverbs that talks about the wise and the fool. That just happens to have 31 chapters, so you can read a chapter each day. For years of my life, I read a chapter every day over and over again, and you know what it did? It helped me. It worked how to handle people. It helped me on the police department, how to handle people. I could discern people very quickly, wise or foolish. I do not care what they say. I do not care how they look. I watch their action, go, "Well, there is a fool." You see, that gives you that kind of insight to go through those things. That is one of the keys why he put that in. It helps us evaluate and judge our daily walk.

All you have got to do is just say, "Lord, is what I am about to do? Is this wise or is this foolish?" And guess what God will do? "I will make that clear to you." You see, you are getting in contact with God now. God said, "Boy, if you are concerned about your walk, then I am going to get more involved in your life because you are concerned about Me." Think about it. That is exactly what God wants us to do, to stop and think when we do something and ask the Lord. At first, you ask yourself, "Is this wise or foolish?" Second, "Lord, confirm it for me." If you have a doubt, ask God to confirm it for you. He will have no problem doing it. It is those questions of evaluation. Is it foolish or wise? That is what we are supposed to do.

SEC: The Drive to Redeem Time

Now, let us go to the next step. The next step of order to maintain your priorities. You know what it is? It results in a drive to redeem your time. You are going to be driven to redeem your time. I look back at all of those years that I had run from God, that I had made a mess of my life over and over again. When God woke me up and I got up, He gave me the light. You know what I wanted to do? I wanted to make up for what I lost.

I will tell you how I did it. I worked a full-time job and started a church in my house. I went on 20-some mission trips and did whatever I could that the Lord opened the opportunity. He said, "Well, how did you do that?" Real simple. I went in and told my boss, "Here are my priorities. My priorities: my God, my family, and my ministry that God asked me to do. And then down here, I will do my job." You know what my boss told me? I will never forget it. He is lost as a

goose, and he sat there and he says, "I will tell you what, you go on all the mission trips you need to. You do what you have to do. I just want you when you are off back here at this office. Okay?" That is what he did. Then he had me go get a new truck.

Then what God did, He opened the door of starting the circuit riding for Bob. I went to Osceola for three years and Iola for three years and had a new truck to drive. My boss, I told him, I said, "I am going to have to drive the truck because I only got..." "Oh, that is fine." You see what God does? You make the move. God makes the move next.

Look what he says here in Ephesians 5:16, because here is the results of this drive to redeem your time.

Ephesians 5:16

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

This verse is dealing with you spending your time. How are you spending your time? Are you redeeming it for Me? Or are you using it for you? Where are your values at? Spending your time in the right things with the right people is the key. He just told me that in two verses.

When you wake up, you have a new awareness of evil, decay, and corruption around you. The sad part, many people are waiting for things to return to normal. Let me just say this: normal is not coming back. Jesus is. Normal is gone. This country is gone. It is not coming back. No use waiting on it. I am waiting for the trumpet. Once that sound happens, I am gone.

You need to understand. You ought to be excited about the rapture. You know what I used to do? I had a secretary, and she had to go with me to make sales calls. So I had talked to her about the rapture and this. I told her about our dog and how much I loved our dog. One day we are in the car, and I said, "Here is the key to my house." She says, "What is that for?" I said, "Well, if all of a sudden there is a storm, we are gone. I want that dog taken care of. In fact, here is \$500 to get you started, and then you can change the things in the house." I mean, she was shook.

Of course, the first time she had to go with me, I took her to the house to introduce her to my wife, because I know how the devil plays. I showed her. I said, "See, that key works." And she goes, "It does." Her life went down the tube, and she got a divorce. One day she says, "Tell me about it." I ended up leading her to the Lord. You know what she did? I will never forget. We are in the truck, and I lead her to the Lord. We are both crying. She pulls the key out. She says, "Give it to Shelley. She is going to need it." Do you realize how people shook them up? Because you know what? I was serious. I cared about her. I wanted her to be saved, but that was her choice. I wanted that dog taken care of. But you see, you talk about these things and you do these things to people to wake them up.

SEC: A Right Relationship with the Lord

Now we are going to the third step here to maintain your priorities. This is the one I love. It is called a right relationship with the Lord. A right individual relationship with the Lord. Individual. So many times, ladies, you depend on your husband. No, individual. Gentlemen, you depend on your wives. No, individual. Because this is the most important relationship, because somewhere

down the road something is going to happen in your life where you are going to have to get a hold of God and know you have got a hold of Him. You are going to need Him in your life. You are going to want Him in your life.

Look what it says in Ephesians 5:17.

Ephesians 5:17

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Now this is you surrendering your will, seeking God's will for your life. That is all it is. "Lord, I have got no plans. Tell me what you want me to do. Lord, I surrender."

I remember my church, I taught them that they could raise their hands and praise God and do all this. I can remember my two boys coming up and saying, "Dad, we are not going back to that church." I said, "What? You have become charismatic on us." Really? I said, "Son, you know what I do as a police officer?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "You know what people do when they surrender?" I said, "That is all that is. Don't worry, son. We are not talking in tongues. I will talk very clearly to you." But is this a thing we need to realize? Is this surrendering our will?

You need to understand, according to Romans 12:2, there are three levels of God's will. I thought of it today. I am thinking about there. There is the good will of God. There is the acceptable will of God, and the perfect will of God. You know what that would be on your grade card? A, B, C. God has a grading system. Anything below a C? Sorry, you do not get the honor roll. Think about it.

You need to realize this is not between you and your pastor. This is not you and the church. This is between you and your Lord. This is where you say, "I want to know Your will for my life. I want You to know. I want to know what You want out of me, God. I want to please You."

Look what he says in Ephesians 5:18.

Ephesians 5:18

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Now, please understand that any alcohol drink is of the wrong spirit. Wine is the excess. I had a lot of Baptists in our church. We had people come in because I taught you were not supposed to drink. You are not supposed to have anything to do with alcohol. I did a whole two-week series on it, just showing them, "Hey, this is why. And this is what." You see, you cannot be mixing that spirit of this world with God's spirit because they do not mix.

Let me just say this about alcohol. Alcohol is the best and most perfect solvent I have ever seen work. It dissolves marriages. It dissolves families. It dissolves people's careers. It dissolves their lives. You get mixing with alcohol. It will have an effect upon you and dissolve things.

When I went through the cancer process with my wife, you know what I found out? Her chances of survival dropped down to 40% if she had drank every month. 40%. As a policeman, it was very simple. We do an autopsy. I remember the first time I went there and the doctor says, "Oh,

you see this? This is liver." And he goes, "See how hard it is?" He says, "That is what alcohol does." You know how I taught my kids about alcohol? Every time they get cut, I said, "I am going to show you what alcohol is like." Guess what I would do on that wound? Do you know how bad that burns? I remember my boys looking at me and I says, "If you think that burns that way, think what it does inside when it hits your internal organs." You see, alcohol will just flat destroy everything. A true, spiritual life cannot mix with the world.

What we are going to see here in this little passage of this relationship with God, is how to get the true, spirit-filled life.

Ephesians 5:19

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

I want you to know what we are going to deal with here. I am going to show you some personal stuff I had to do to get to there. You need to notice all the things that he just listed there are not for public display. They are not to impress your friends and say, "Well, see how I get a hold of God?" You would be in some churches, they put on all kinds of shows on how they get a hold of God and how they do those. He said, "No, that is not what it is all about."

So let me give you something real personal and practical here. I am going to take the time and say this: you are going to have to take your time and make up your own pattern of personal worship. You need to understand when he is talking about a spirit-filled life, it is a personal worship. It is like an intimate relationship with the Lord Himself. It is the closeness that you feel in a good marriage between a couple. It requires your desire, your commitment, your time, and your effort.

Here are some of the ways to get there. In Psalms 100:4, it says, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." "Enter into his gates." I have got to get up to the door. "Enter into his courts," into the inner area where He is at. There is nothing better when you are up there and you are getting a hold of God and He says, "Come on in." You know it because there will be a peace that will come over you that you cannot explain.

I want to give you some insights because nobody showed me this. I had to do it on my own. Now, mine goes like this. Many times I use music to get me there because music changes. Music affects the soul. Music affects the mind. Music gets my spirit in the right place. I will use music to get me there because I have got so much junk of the world clouding in on my life. I just want to get a hold of God, and you have got to get away. You cannot do it in a crowd. You cannot do it with anybody around. It has just got to be you and God where you want the time.

I will play the very first song I play is, "Who Am I?" by Casting Crowns. Anybody know that song? It says, "Who am I that the Lord of all the earth would care to know my name, would care to feel my hurt?" You know the first thing I have got to get, "Who am I to even have the right to come to You, God? Who am I? I am worthless. I am nothing but a vapor in the wind. I am nothing, and I am allowed to come." I have got to get my position right, and that song tears me

down. That song tears me down and puts me in my perspective when it comes to relating to Him. "Who am I?"

The next thing that I will do, I sing the song of Psalms 5:1-3.

Psalms 5:1-3

Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.

Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

You know what that means? I am so caught up in singing that song back to Him, and I look up and I say, "God, I have to look up because You are just so magnificent and You are filled to all of this," and I look at His creation, and I am getting in touch with Him, and I am getting my spirit right. I am getting our perspectives right. He is my Lord and Savior. He is God.

After I sing that song, I play a praise melody of just the music behind there. Then I go secular. I play Kenny G's music. No words, but beautiful music, and I will sing my prayer and my speech to Him with that music background. I imagine myself standing before heaven because I mean nobody else is going to do it without God around listening to my song. I stand before heaven, and I am singing a song. "Oh God, I cannot believe You have allowed me in here. Oh God, how much I love Thee. God, You have blessed me so many ways. God, I have seen Your hand in this." And I just recite my whole life to Him. "Oh Lord, You were with me when this happened. Oh Lord, it was You that took care of me." And I just had this time with all this music. That is my personal worship.

Then I end it, and I play a song, "Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart." I have just had my time with God, and whatever my problem was, it eased up.

Look at Ephesians 5:20.

Ephesians 5:20

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

You know why you have to stay true to this? Because I remember the next morning after my wife died, my arms, that I went and gave God thanks for taking her. "Thank You, Lord." Because my prayer I learned through all this stuff that we went through, I learned what to pray. "God, don't do what is right for me. Do what is right for her. I don't want to see her go through this. You do what is right. You love her more than I could." And He did.

That day that He took her, and I got in the car with my children and their mates, and I am sitting in that car, and that seat is empty. I went, we made the funeral arrangements, and I came back, and I thanked Him for it. Why? She is better off with Him than me. He will take care of her. That

is the relationship you get with God. That is what this is all about, is getting this relationship with God and getting in there.

SEC: The Marriage Relationship

Now we get to move on. We go to the fourth step in Ephesians 5:21. It is the marriage relationship. Is not it funny? You get the right relationship with the Lord, and now he says, "Okay, marriage." You want a good marriage? It starts with you getting your individual relationship right with God, and that will give you a good marriage. That is what does it.

Look what he says here.

Ephesians 5:21

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

This is the key foundational verse of every marriage to survive. It is you submitting yourselves one to another. That is where it has to be. You have to submit, and you have a good, healthy fear and reverence of respect, both of you, and both of you will do what the book says, but you have to submit to each other. You have to listen to each other. That is what he is talking about. You have to be where you can communicate and value that person's opinion as much as you do yours. That is the foundational verse for a good marriage.

Then he addresses the woman, and she is addressed first here because of the fall of Genesis, and here he starts. Now every man will know this verse.

Ephesians 5:22

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Now you need to understand, gentlemen, that is her decision. It is between her and the Lord, and let me tell you, putting this verse over the headboard of the bed is not going to change her mind. I do not know how many people, that is like a drunk. "You do not take a little wine for your stomach. You do not take a little wine for your stomach." Say, "This is men's greatest verse. Wives, submit to your husband." You know what that is what the Bible says. That is what it says. "Submit, submit." Now how many times would you submit? Somebody say, "I said submit." It is not going to happen. It is a decision of submitting to each other first, and you talk about it, and that mate of yours can go, "You know, we need to talk about this. You need to value what I have to say." That is what does it. You see, "as unto the Lord," and I used to tell men all the time, "When you start acting like God and treating her the way God does, she will submit." That is what it starts.

Now ladies, you are pretty lucky because you have got this one verse. The rest is the men's. Look what it says here. As he quotes this verse, and then in Ephesians 5:22, he says, "Wives, submit to your husbands as unto the Lord." This is her decision.

He then goes over to Ephesians 5:23 and starts addressing the men.

Ephesians 5:23

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Ephesians 5:24

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Paul adds in Colossians, "as it is fit in the Lord." Then he goes on.

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Notice here he defines the kind of love you are to give your wife. You are to love her as defined as giving of yourself. As a matter of fact, I am going to tell you this, gentlemen, men are reminded three times in this chapter alone to love your wives. Now why does he have to tell men to love their wives? He never tells the wives to love their... he does, he references way back in some other books, but never... why does he have to tell men three times? Because we do not get it. Because we love guns, we love cars, we love our this, we love sports, we love that. I mean, you know, "You got her?" "Yeah, I got her. I loved her. I really loved her. I got her. Okay." And everything is fine, but we also love everything else, and it comes ahead of her. Not so. Not so. That is why he has to keep telling us. He tells us this in this verse, he tells us in Ephesians 5:28, he tells us in Ephesians 5:33.

You see, men love everything else, and sometimes even love their friends more than their wives. My big question is, if I was a lady, I would be asking this question: "Where was Adam when he sinned with the devil?" He was golf, fishing, hunting. He was out. "I thought you loved her. You told her she was the only woman in the world." "Yeah, she was."

I asked a guy one time, I said, "When is the last time you told your wife how much you loved her?" "I think it is about 10, 15 years ago." "Wow. Think you ought to renew it?" "Well, she ought to know it. I come home." "Really? I do not think she has got the clue yet. That is why she has those divorce papers." That is why men are usually the last ones to figure out their marriage just went south.

Look what he says.

Ephesians 5:26

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

A husband's responsibility is to be teaching and equipping your wife in the Word of God. I am not telling you to get in the pulpit and preach to her. I am telling you to say, "Hey, honey, look at what God showed me today." You know what you do? You make yourself accountable to it. "Look what God showed me, honey. Look at this, honey. What do you think about this verse?" Wait until your wife is facing death, and she sits there and she says, "Tell me what heaven is going to be like." And you are sitting there teaching her what heaven is going to be like, knowing she is going to be there shortly. Will you do it? Take her up and give her to the pastor? "Hey, can

you tell her what heaven is going to be like? I would like to hear it too." That is your job. This is number one. You have got your first relationship with the Lord, and your second one is with your wife.

Look what he says as he goes down in Ephesians 5:27.

Ephesians 5:27

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:28

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

Ephesians 5:29

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

Husbands, you are supposed to nourish your relationship with your wife. That means you are to feed it. You say, "Oh, well, I take her out to dinner." No. "I love you. Hey, you are looking good. I like that dress. What do you... You look sweet today. You are the sweetest thing I have ever met." Over and over again. She will never get tired of it. You will never stop it. "I am tired of you being nice to me." That will not happen. I promise you. She will go, "Oh, I think he is starting to believe it because he is even saying it over again." You cannot say enough.

Look what else he is to do: is to cherish the relationship. You know what that means? Place the highest value on that relationship above everything else. The highest value. That is all she wants. See, she is already committed. She just wants you to be committed to her.

You know, there is a... when I did a marriage seminar way back, I remember one time I asked, "When you see a man open a door for a woman, what does it mean?" Well, I can tell you what my answer means: new wife or new car. No, it should be a man who loves his wife. Why? Is she capable of opening the door? She most certainly is. That is why Henry Ford put it there. I heard that one too. But you know what? When I take the time to place my wife in my car, I am telling everybody in public, "This is my wife that I value, that I care about."

You know, I asked this question, I used to ask this in marriage retreats. I said, "So what takes more work, a new house or an old house?" They all say, "Well, the old house." "Well, what takes more work, a new car or an old car?" They all say, "Oh, well, the old car, of course." "What takes more work, a new marriage or an old marriage?" The longer you have been married, it takes more maintenance and more work. That is your responsibility. That is not hers. That is yours. You see, wives cannot fix marriages. The man can. He is the leader of the home. That is what you have to be, and that is what God wants you to be.

Now look what he says in Ephesians 5:30.

Ephesians 5:30

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Because you are joint heirs.

Ephesians 5:31

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

The main goal of every marriage is this: "and they shall be one flesh." That is the goal of a marriage: one flesh. That is the goal. Not two independent people, one flesh. Let me tell you, you have to be one flesh if you have more than two kids. They outnumber you already, and they start wanting to vote. Okay? You have to, you have to be on the same page.

You see, the husband has a greater list of requirements because, gentlemen, we are the ones that will be held responsible for our marriage. As the marriage goes, the family goes. If you do not believe that, just read Genesis chapter 3 and 4. Where the devil attacked, he attacked the marriage of Adam and Eve. What happens? Sin entered in. What happens in the next chapter? There went the kids. You see, it is the same old plan, nothing new. This is why you have got to guard your relationship between your wife. You cannot let nothing come between it. It is the most valuable thing you have got, and that is the way it works.

He says, "This is a great mystery," and I speak concerning Christ in the church. And here is how he summarizes it.

Ephesians 5:32

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:33

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

SEC: Children and Family

Now we move on to the fifth step that you have to maintain to set your priorities. The fifth one is this: children from the marriage. That starts in Ephesians chapter 6. Look what it says, because the first group he addresses is the young children that are still at home under the parents' authority.

Ephesians 6:1

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Then he addresses the children who have left home, when your kids are raised and they are out on their own, they have got their own home. He then addresses them starting in Ephesians 6:2.

Ephesians 6:2

Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

Ephesians 6:3

That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

Ephesians 6:4

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

You see, he just covered the kids like that.

SEC: Occupation and Profession

Now the sixth step in order to maintain it is your occupation and your profession, how you earn a living. That starts here in Ephesians 6:5. The first one he is dealing with is the employees who are working for an employer.

Ephesians 6:5

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

Do you realize that your job and your occupation is your mission field? That is the greatest mission field you have got in this world. I used to have to hire people at work, and I would purposely interview them off the company property so I did not violate company rules, and I would end up usually leading one or two of them to the Lord. As a matter of fact, one of my led to the Lord was one that deacons served at the church, him and his wife and his whole kids are serving there. Change your workforce.

He says in Ephesians 6:6.

Ephesians 6:6

Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

You see, when you work, you are working for the Lord. You have to, and doing the will of God. Look where it comes from: the heart. It is a heart decision.

Ephesians 6:7

With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

Your service is to God. When I worked for that employer, I was serving God, and I looked at his mission field, and I loved it.

Ephesians 6:8

Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

God says, "I will take care of it. You do what I ask you to do because you are serving Me. You are working for Me, Terry. You are in My will."

Now in Ephesians 6:9, it says the employer, and this is the one that deals with the employer of employees.

Ephesians 6:9

And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

SEC: Ministry and Service to the Lord

Now we come to the seventh one. This is ministry and service to the Lord. This is where God calls you into service. You are focused on nothing but serving Him. Notice what this one is, because he says, "Finally, my brethren." You know what the word "finally" means? You finally arrived here. You have gone through all these other steps, now you are finally here.

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

He is speaking of a spiritual battle that you are going to enter into. You have not even entered the battle yet, because this battle is going to require total, total reliance upon the Lord, strong relationships of past experience, some present maturity, and to put every piece of armor on and in the right place.

He goes on in Ephesians 6:11.

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Then you get to Ephesians 6:12, he lays out the other four enemies that are going to attack you.

Ephesians 6:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

SEC: Priorities of Relationships

Now we just went through the seven steps, but let me just give you these priorities of relationships, because that is the key thing you have got to get down: the priorities of your relationship.

3. Your first relationship is with the Lord as an individual. It is the number one relationship you have to have.
4. The second relationship is your marriage relationship, because that relationship affects your children.
5. The third relationship is your children from the marriage.

6. The fourth one is your job.
7. The fifth one is the ministry.

Can I put this really, make it more personal and practical so you know what I am talking about? When my wife was diagnosed with cancer and the test revealed immediately that it spread to the lymph nodes, I knew it was bad. Hers was genetic cancer on top of it. I remember being in that emergency room, and half the church was there. My kids were bawling, and we were all... and the doctor says, "Spread to the lymph nodes. It is bad. It is bad."

You know, I did not have to pray and say, "Okay, God, what should I do?" I did not. You see, I had my priorities in order, and my priority was her. You know what I did? Immediately from that room, I called somebody and I says, "I need you to fill in for me at the church for the next three months." I then focused upon my wife and then my children.

After three months, and I can tell you how bad it was in churches, or people are bad, when my wife was going through her cancer treatment, one time about the second trip, she was crying. I said, "Why?" She says, "One of the ladies in the church came up and told me that you were out of God's will. You are the head of the church, and you should be up there preaching."

Let me tell you, when I got back into the pulpit, my first message was about Job's three friends, "Who Needs Them?" And I says, "Dear, you are my first priority. You are the first one. You are the priority. That church is number five. That is God's church, and God will cover it, but you are the one that God is going to hold me accountable for because you are my priority."

I focused on her for the next seven years. For the next seven years, my daughter and I did not miss any doctor's appointments, any chemo treatments, or anything involved about her life and health issues. In fact, by the time she died, she had 59 chemo treatments, 33 radiation treatments, six major surgeries, countless times in the hospital, one time a whole month, and many blood transfusions and platelets. Stacy and I went to every one, every one. I showed my kids my priority. It was my wife because that is the one God gave me.

When you have your priorities right, you will be able to quickly see where they are at. They will keep you in order in your life, in your marriage, and you will have a peace because that relationship with God is right. There will be times that you are going to get alone with God and you say, "You know, God, I have got to talk about something. God, what? How do I handle this? How do I handle that?" And you know what? It is you and Him. Ladies, you have got to have the same relationship with Him. You cannot depend on anyone else. You have got to have it. Let me tell you, once you get there, you will not want to let it go. You will want more of it.

We are all going to fall. We are all going to fail. We are all going to flop as a Christian. What makes you just or wicked is if you get up. You know what? You go back to the starting place. "Well, my relationship is right with the Lord, but me and the wife have been arguing. I have got to get that right because I found out my prayers get hindered." I get that right. "Okay, me and my wife are right, but we are having problems with the kids." So me and her are going to go talk and deal with the kids. You see, all of those things happen, and the same with work and the same like that.

You know what I told my wife? "You are the most important thing." Do you know what that means? When this person is the one that God gave you as a gift. Always ask men who have cheated on their wives, "Why would you exchange a gift that God gave you for something the devil offered you? Why? It is not worth it."

You see, as Christians, if we have our priorities right and we get our things in order, we will not have chaos. So when those problems come, you know where you have got to go first, and you know how to line them all up, and guess what? God steps in and He says, "I will bless you for this. I will help you through this."

I hope you take the words I shared with you personal, because in 2 Corinthians, it is very clear, whatever you go through, it is to help someone else. That is how we learn one from another.

SEC: Conclusion

Would you stand, please? Every head bowed and every eye closed. Let me just ask this: where are you at with the Lord? Do you need to just start over? You need to get some of the priorities straight. We are not having music or anything, but you can come down here and pray and say, "God, I am serious. I am going to change some things today. Lord, You just convicted me of my priorities. You convicted me in my order, and I want to get them straight." This is your time. This is your altar. It is between you and Him. That is what it has to be. Wherever you are at, if God spoke to you, you decide to come because this is part of the service that God gets. His Spirit is present, and His Spirit will be the one speaking to you, not me. I am just the guy here giving you a testimony of how to make it as a Christian so we can walk in there and hear those famous words, "Well done." That is what it is about, those words.

I will tell you now, there is nothing any sweeter than that time when you get your praise and worship service, and you go off and you get alone with God, and you and Him just talk about everything, and you can get things settled that have been bothering you for a long time because there should not be nothing between you and your Savior. Your invitation, if God spoke to you, you come, dear.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the day I preached that which You would have me preach. You told me about it a year or so ago, and I pray, Lord, that this will affect people's lives, their lives and their relationship with You. I want people to know You deeply and intimately and to feel Your presence in their life, that they can start seeing Your hand in their life, and they can walk out praising and glorifying You. May we all keep our priorities right and keep our order right, that we have a life that glorifies You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.