

If you have your Bibles, let's go to Genesis 2, and then we'll move from there to Ephesians 5. Here's what we're going to do. I don't want to lie to you; I want to come right out of the gate. Male and female alike, we're going to stand in front of the mirror tonight, and I'll tell you how I hope it goes. I can't control how it goes; I'm just going to tell you how I hope it goes. It could go one of three ways. You can stand in front of the mirror and hate what you see and get discouraged and walk away from it and just let yourself go. You can look in the mirror and hate what you see and hate it and start taking steps, even small ones. And for some of you, you might even be able to look in the mirror and go, "I'm getting better." But my hope is one of the latter two, not the first, male and female alike. I won't recap much of last week. If you missed it, grab it off the podcast.

Let's go. Genesis 2, we'll pick it up in verse 18. What's happened up to this point in the story is that God creates the entire world. He creates the majority of that world to be wild, untamed and rugged. And then, right in the middle of this wild, untamed, rugged world, He puts the garden of Eden, and then He puts the man in the garden of Eden and He tells him to cultivate the rest of the world and make it look like Eden. And so, although male and female we are equal, men and women have different natures. And I said this isn't complex. Just watch children. You don't have to be a sociologist or some kind of brilliant academic; all you have to do is watch. Boys will build stuff and knock it over; girls get two objects and make them friends. They just do. They don't even have to be real objects. That's what they do. Boys build, kick, knock over. And we talked about it last week, how there is sometimes crossover, but on a whole, men have been designed by God to be builders and cultivators and creators. And we talked last week that, because of the fall, everything man is supposed to cultivate will at times war against him, and it will be difficult to be what God said a man is going to be. Now, God creates the garden of Eden, throws Adam in there and tells him to make the rest of the world look like Eden. Now, let's pick up the story. Starting in verse 18, "*Then the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.*" This is very interesting that before the fall occurs, before sin enters into the world, God watches the man cultivate. So man is doing what man's been called to do. He's cultivating, building, and God looks at it and goes, "Uh uh, not good for this guy to be alone." And that's not part of the fall. "It's not good for this guy to be alone." So let's look at the answer. Verse 19, "*Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.*" So, God says, "This man, to be the cultivator, to be the builder, to be the creator I need him to be, I want him to be, I designed him to be, he needs help getting there." And so, God creates out of the ground every animal imaginable and brings them to the man. Every one of those animals, he has absolute dominion over, and among everything, there's not a suitable helper. Out of everything, there's nothing that's suitable to help the man to be the full-on cultivator that God created him to be. So let's watch this. Verse 21, "*So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,...*" Do you see how it breaks there in your text? That's because he's singing. He all of a sudden goes poetic. Now catch this. He saw every animal imaginable; he's like, "Cow, dog, giraffe..." God brings a naked woman on the scene, all of a sudden we're singing. Like, he's just been unmoved by it all; a naked woman shows up all of a sudden...singing. "*This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*" "Woman" in Hebrew basically means "mine." I love that part. "Dog, cat, giraffe....oh, that one

is mine Mine, that's what that is.” Now look, “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*” Verse 25 is the happiest it's ever been on planet Earth. “*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*” And from that moment on, all men are trying to get back to verse 25. They want to be naked somewhere with a woman with fruit and everything going well. And so God says, “This man needs help becoming the cultivator that I've designed him to be. He'll need the woman,” and He creates the woman to help the man become all that God created him to be, before the fall. This is very interesting.

Now, I want to say couple words to the single men and women in here. There's some weird things that have happened among Evangelicals, and I blame it mainly on really bad Christian dating books...courting, whatever. Call it what you want. Kiss it goodbye. Do whatever you want to do, but I want to say this. In this moment, God sees that it's not good for man to be alone, creates the woman, and in so doing, He creates marriage. He creates marriage. “It's not good for this man to be alone. For this man to become all that I want him to be, I will give him woman. And woman combined with man will make him the cultivator, the creator that I want him to be.” But something's happened in Evangelical circles where, if you're single, you're supposed to not want to get married but be content in a spot, and that's somehow more glorifying than to follow God's wiring of you to want a mate. So in the end, what happens is you walk around like a liar. I mean poor young ladies, almost all of them have been told “As soon as you're content, God will send you a man.” So you've got hundreds of thousands of women running around acting content. “I'm content. Where is he?” And you've got other guys going, “You know, I'm just going to wait for God to bring me the right one.” Well, you ain't waiting for God to bring you your dinner; you get up and you go cook it. So, it's a mandate from God to be married. Now, I'm not telling you to hunt, all camouflaged up in Bed, Bath & Beyond. “What is that, a 1000 count sheet? Yeah, I like that too...” That's a little bit ridiculous, but let me say this. Ladies, if you're single, there is nothing wrong, sinful or wicked about desiring a husband. Anyone who would say otherwise is absolutely lying to you. God wired you for it; He built you for it. Men, there's nothing wrong, wicked or evil about wanting a wife. I don't know when that happened. Now listen, I do think you need to be content with where you are today. But listen, I'm content with what Christ is doing in me today, but I don't want to be who I am today. I'm hoping for Christ to complete what He began. It's okay; it's alright. Why have we made it so complicated? It's okay to want a wife. It's okay to want a husband. Those things are good things. They're really good things.

Now, here's a question. The difference between all that God created and the woman was that all that God created, all that He brought before Adam to see if it was a suitable helper, he had complete dominion over, which means he said, “You're a cow,” and the cow couldn't go, “I ain't no cow.” He just took it, and went off was a cow to this day. But the woman can talk back. So now, for the first time, you've got this real relational aspect occurring that hasn't occurred so far in creation. Now all of a sudden, there's relationship to be had. So here's the question I'll set out to answer tonight: How does this relationship work? How do we do this, specifically in a fallen world? Specifically in a broken world, how do we do this, be husbands? How do be wives? What's the model that we've been given. That takes us to the hard part.

Let's go over to Ephesians 5. What I want to do is read this whole text to you, and then we'll come back and chat. “*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their*”

husbands.” This is a wildly unpopular idea, but we'll get into it. I will also tell you that everywhere the Scriptures address marriage, they always deal with the woman first, always. I'll explain why when we get into some of the Proverbs. Verse 25, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.”

Now, the Scriptures always begin with the woman because no man can lead a woman who refuses to follow. I don't care what kind of leadership training, I don't care if he's Patton, you're not going to lead a woman who absolutely refuses to follow you. And while we're on the subject, I'll tell you that the Scriptures are very, very clear that there are two kinds of wives. Let me read you just a real quick Proverb. Proverb 12:4 says, “*An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones.*” So there is a type of wife, there is a type of woman that speaks life into her husband in such a way that she is the crown jewel of all that he accomplishes and all that he does. But there's another type of wife that, like a cancer, eats away at her man's masculinity by belittling, attacking and chiseling away at him any opportunity she gets. And Proverbs dogs this woman constantly. The book of Proverbs says that it's better for a man to live on his roof than it is for him to live with a woman who constantly belittles and berates him; it is better for a man to die in the desert. If I get to make a list of ways I want to die, slowly cooking to death in the desert doesn't make the top 40. And He says it's better for a man to go out into the desert and die slowly than to live in the house with a woman who constantly nitpicks and attacks him. The Scriptures say a woman like this is like a dripping faucet. And when I first read that, I was like, “That doesn't really sound too bad. I mean, dripping faucets don't bother me.” And then I started thinking, “Some governments use that to torture people.” I mean, if you think about it, if you're torturing, you're trying to get top secret information out of them. “How are we going to do it?” “We're just going to, with water, nag the soul out of them.” Nag, nag, nag, nag, nag, nag, nag, nag, be back in 10 years...nag, nag, nag, nag. “I'll tell you whatever you want to know.” Proverbs says loving a woman like this is like trying to grab hold of oil; loving a woman like that is like trying to stop the wind. And normally here, we're real sweet on the wives and we beat up on the husbands, because most of the time, I think it's our failure, but you can't get around the fact that the Bible's very, very clear that there are certain women who destroy certain men's chances at manhood altogether. I mean, they absolutely take it from them and then, what I've found, are very verbal about complaining about their man's lack of ability to be a man as they continually emasculate them. It's a weird, weird, weird process. And listen, if you're really, really upset about what I'm saying right now, I'm just reading the Proverbs to you. So just check your own heart, check your own life. There are some women who hate the idea of submission. I believe it is a much easier task than the one He lays on the shoulders of the man momentarily. It's a much easier task and one I don't know as a man that I even desire. He just put on us. But no more of this.

Women, you think about that, and I'm going to spend the next two hours with the men. Let's go. We'll pick it up in verse 25, “*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*” Okay, so here's what He throws on the man. He comes to the woman and says, “In this relationship that I've built out, you're going

to submit to Christ-like leadership.” And then He goes over to the man and says, “You’re going to love your wife like Christ loved the church.” And so you start running through it: how does Christ love the church? He rescues her, He saves her, He becomes sin for her, He has His body ripped apart for her, and here’s the kicker and here’s where I want to spend my time tonight, He does it all, not because the bride asked for it, but He initiates on His own. And that’s what I think is so big about this text. The bride doesn’t come to Jesus and go, “I need saving. If You get a chance,…” The bride doesn’t come to Jesus and say, “I’m going to worship You, I’m going to love You, I’m going to write some great songs an acoustic guitar for you and I’m going to try to do everything You say for the rest of my life.” The church, the bride could care less about Christ. She is stuck in her own sins, not worried about that. The messiah she was seeking was a messiah that would free her from Roman occupation, not one that would save her soul. And yet Christ initiates the salvation of His bride. What does this mean? It means that the mantle on men is to initiate, in their marriage, initiate, initiate the fight for wholeness, initiate the fight for healing, initiate, initiate, initiate. Far too many women are the initiators in relationships and homes.

And let me tell you why I think this is such a big deal and why I think it’s nearly impossible without the Holy Spirit’s power. Let me give you just a quick example of what I’m talking about. The Bible’s really clear that one of the worst things you can do as a married couple is let the sun go down on your anger. And the reason that is is because you’ll lay in bed, she’ll face this way and you’ll face that way, and you’ll let that root of bitterness just start going down. In fact, you’ll help it go down. You’ll drill it, you’ll go, “Oh, she doesn’t respect me, she doesn’t think I’m blah blah blah…” And she’ll be doing the same, and the root of bitterness will just grow and grow and grow. And so, the Bible says, “Hey, don’t let that happen. You need to nip it in the bud. You need to not go to bed angry. You need to, with all your might, try to resolve it before you go to bed at night.” So, I think the weight of that falls on the man. And I know some of you are like, “You do not know my wife, Chandler. I’ve seen your wife; she sings, she’s beautiful, she looks so sweet.” Listen, two days ago, I saw fire shoot out of my wife’s eyes and kill a puppy. Where does that stuff come from? I swear that’s nowhere in my notes. The puppy was just howling and screaming, and she was just like “HA HA HA ” You don’t know who I married. But here’s what I would tell you biblically. If your wife, in that moment, 10:30, 11:00, midnight, is facing this way and you’re facing that way and she is 99.999% to blame, it falls on you to roll over, tap her on the shoulder and say, “I don’t want to go to bed like this. I need to apologize for my 0.001%.” Just for the record, I wouldn’t use numbers. But I would do this, “Lauren, before we try to go to sleep tonight. I know you’re angry, I’m angry. I need to apologize for how I handled what happened earlier. I didn’t respond in love. I reacted. I said things I didn’t mean. I need to apologize for that.” Then it’s over. I don’t go, “I need to apologize for how I responded earlier. It just wasn’t godly. It wasn’t who I wanted to be. I reacted rather than responded. I apologize. Do you have anything to say to me? I was wondering, I just thought you had something to say also. No? Well, I take it back then.” That’s now how it’s done. The initiative is on me to be the peacemaker in my home, to fight for my wife’s healing, my wife’s wholeness, to fight for it. Even if I’m 99.9999% innocent in the conflict, it falls on me to be the peacemaker, the initiator. We initiate. And we’ll get more into this idea as we continue on in the text.

Let’s keep reading. Verse 28, *“In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.”* Let me chat about this, because I want to try to explain this idea of loving oneself. I am of the opinion, the older I get, the more I work with men in particular, that most men do not love the woman

they're with, they love themselves, and the women they're with are a means to an end. They are with them because they'd be lonely without them or they want to have a lot of sex and they think that's the way to go or they think that "Mature men get married, and I'm mature now, so I need a wife." But they don't love the woman; they love what the woman could bring, what the woman can give. And what this text is saying is that there are men like that, but we are not to be those type of men. We don't love our women because they _____; we love our wives. And then He doesn't leave that as some ambiguous term; He actually starts to define it. So look at it. How do we do that? How do we love our wives like we love our own bodies? Look at it, verse 29, "*For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.*" This word "nourish," whenever it's used in the Scriptures, and it's used a lot, almost always refers to parents providing for children. There are one or two instances where it's not talking about parents and children, but it almost always means provision, to provide for. And so, there are two things going on here: one is physical, and then one is spiritual. So I'll just say this, and then I want to give some clarifying statements because it honestly needs it. What this means, as God calling men to be nourishers, is that men are to be the primary bread winner for the home. We are to provide food, we are to provide shelter, we are to provide clothing. This is what we are, providers. Now, there are definitely seasons of time where this gets out of kilter. There are times where men lose a job or they get laid off, they're actively seeking another job and for whatever reason, it's just not happening and for a season, the wife becomes the primary bread winner. Or there are times where a man is getting his masters, getting his PhD, doing something like that and the woman becomes the bread winner while he's doing those things. But it is unbiblical and outright sinful for you to be mastering "Doom 3" on Xbox while your wife is working. It's wicked. Men are to be the primary bread winners for the home. The Scriptures are absolutely clear that man's fight and war is in the workplace cultivating and a woman's is to domesticate and love and build the home.

And I don't know how in the world that became a small office. With a stay-home wife and two small children, I have no idea how that became some second class occupation. I don't want that job. I don't want it. I've had it. I mean, I've been there, two babies, vacuuming, throwing Cheerios to keep that one alive, making that one put scissors down. I mean, I don't want it. I've come in, I've seen what happens. My wife is this beautiful, gentle, passionate, patient woman, and I've come in and been like, "Hey baby,..." "Take your kids and leave." I've seen what's happened, and I'm like, "For good? Am I leaving for good? No? Okay, just for an hour? Alright, I can do that. Ice cream...No? No ice cream? Okay." I mean, I don't know how that became some kind of second class, weak existence. It may be the hardest thing. I don't know when that happened to us. And then, do you want to know just how sad our country has gotten? All you have to do is talk to young girls about why they're getting their college degree and what they really desire. I've met hundreds of them. They'll say to you, "I want to be a wife and I want to be a mother, but I've got to be prepared in case something happens." Do you know how insane it is that in our society, women are getting ready for their divorce before they even get married? And listen, I'm not anti-education or anti-girls going to college. I'm not saying that; I'm just trying to paint a picture of how weird it's gotten out there.

Men are to be the primary bread winners. We are to nourish, provide for. That's only at the physical level. I also think there's something that needs to occur at the spiritual level in terms of nourishment. The weight of spiritually feeding the family falls on the man. And even godly men struggle with this one. We need to take the initiative in our homes to pool the family together for prayer, to pool the family to get together in the Word, to pool the family together and talk about who He is and what He's like. And listen, in my home, Lauren and I sit down and

we talk about what that would look like, and she sets it up and I just show up. And I don't think you need to walk your family through T.U.L.I.P. or the 5 points of Calvinism. I mean, it can be a three minute long reading of a Psalm, but men need to take the leadership of that. And I can tell you why most of us don't do it. Because you can't feed when you're starving to death yourself. You don't have anything to give them. You're not feeding yourself. You're not disciplined enough to pursue the Lord yourself. So how in the world are you ever supposed to feed your family? But this is God's command. And listen, I know some of you aren't taking me seriously. I even know some of you more modern types might think that I'm backwards, but I'll tell you this. When I look at how Jesus responds to men who fail to lead their wives, He almost always wants to have a conversation with them that they do not want to have. I mean, Jesus shows up in the garden, starts walking through the garden and is like, "Um Adam, what happened?" He didn't start looking for Eve. He held the man to account. Paul's very clear about this in the New Testament.

Nourish, but that's not the only one. This is the one that I think stings so bad. And some of us are like, "Please don't read it then...If that was light-handed, stop." Verse 29, "*For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it,...*" This word "cherish" is used only one other time in the entire Bible, in the New Testament in particular. It's when Paul is talking about his relationship with the church, and he basically says, "I took care of you gently like a mother taking care of her children." And this idea of cherish is to treat gently. You have this same idea occurring in 1 Peter 3 when it calls women the weaker vessel. My wife hates that verse. When she first read it, she was like, "You need to explain this text to me." So I was like, "I will gladly explain this text to you. Weaker vessel is a reference to porcelain, that women are like porcelain. Watch what comes out of your mouth towards them, watch how you touch them, watch how you handle them. They are not to be handled verbally or physically rough. Like porcelain." Again, I think this plays out physically, and I think this plays out spiritually. How do I think this plays out physically? I think we could go on and on and on with examples here, but let me give you just this. Do you know how you cherish your wife? Here's a great, easy way to cherish your wife. Be around. Just be around. Now listen, I know you love golf, but be around. Do you know that God has designed the majority of women to feel and receive love through quality time and physical touch? I'm not talking about sexual touch, just physical touch. I think we call it cuddling. And listen, do you want to know an unbelievably easy way to get in good? Just say no. Just let the phone go off, and go, "Oh yeah, you guys are golfing? No, I'm going to stay home. I'm going to stay home with my girl. You guys have fun." "Who was that?" "Billy and the boys. They were going to go play golf for 6-7 hours. And I like golf, but I like you more." Now, how easy was that? I mean, that's not being creative, that's not buying gifts. That's just not playing a stupid game with most of your dumb friends for six hours on Saturday. I don't think that's very complex. I mean, I think it's really kind of easy. Cherish.

Let me speak to something here. Cherishing, verbally being gentle, verbally being encouraging, verbally and physically being nurturing towards our wives is very difficult for men because it creates intimate environments, and those are weird for most of us. So in the end, what you have is lazy men who refuse to do that to protect themselves. And then what ends up happening is this. The wife goes to bed, the husband stays up, continues to watch SportsCenter again and again, flips through channels, eventually gets bored with that and before you know it, now look at the insanity of this, he ends up on his computer looking at images of other naked women when in reality he's got one in the other room. Now I'm 33, but that doesn't seem like a good trade to me. Naked women on a screen that I can fantasize about vs. real one in the bedroom. "Oh, well my wife won't have anything to do with me." Okay, so maybe we're onto something. Maybe

we need to be cherishing some more. So let me tell you what ends up happening, and I'm just telling you this from five years of pastoral experience. What you end up getting is very lonely men who are constantly living in a fantasy world instead of living deeply with a wife of their youth. We've already talked about this. "Whoever finds a wife, he finds what is good, he finds favor with the Lord." So God gave us this wife not just for sex and play but also for intimacy and a fulfilling of what He created us to walk in, and we neglect that for this chick we saw at the gym that we think is hot. So now we're running these scenarios through our head instead of using that creative, brilliant mind to dote on and love and walk in intimacy with our wives. It's really a broken, sad thing. And I think in the end, it's just laziness. Because intimacy is tough work. No man I've ever met stumbles into intimacy. "I was playing flag football, came home, had a beer and the next thing I know, I was walking deeply with my wife. It just came out of nowhere." I mean, I have never, never met that guy. There are definitely men that are more sensitive than others. There's absolutely no doubt about that, but I've never met the guy that stumbled into intimacy. It has to be thoughtful. It has to be worked at. It literally has to be fought for. You have to fight to get there. He nourishes it, he cherishes it.

I also think this cherishing idea holds true, not only physically but also spiritually. We need to be asking our wives, "What's the Lord doing in your heart? What's He doing in your life?" Then we need to come along side of that and build it up any way we can. Like, I think it's a necessity for men to understand and know the path by which their wife walks with the Lord. So in my house, that's music. Lauren will just get on the piano, and she'll just sing and play. This was my wife here singing tonight. She just wants to sing the songs, she wants to sing. And so, what I want to do is just try to breathe life into that at any step I can, whether that be a journal for her to write songs in, whether that be springing some cash for her piano, whether it's a weekend like this where we have to do some weird things in terms of who's watching our kids so she can do that and I can do this. I want to do that. Why? Because that's cherishing, not my wife's role with me but her walk with the Lord. I'm supposed to cherish that, gently lead and guide that. And you can go back up to the top here, washing her in the water of the Word, which isn't me reading her the Scriptures of how her body belongs to me and she should submit. And I tell guys this all the time: if you're quoting Scripture to your wife, you've probably already lost. If you're like, "Take a look at that," that's probably strike three. You want to live in such a way, walk in such a way, guide in such a way.

Alright, so what are my hopes? This is a really male disease. Right now, because I'm aware of how the Holy Spirit works, I think the Lord's probably stirring in certain men's heart sin here, "This needs to be done... this needs to happen... you need to give your girl an apology on the way home...you need to ask for this...you know what? You need to sit down with your family tonight...you need to take your wife through this...you need to..." And right now, God's throwing those things in your head, but here's what I know. This is such a male disease. "Ah, I need to do that. Oh, I didn't know the Bills were playing this afternoon!" Then it's gone. And although we know what we should do, we don't. Because it's awkward and weird, and now that I've preached on it, it will feel even more awkward and weird. Because your girl knows you're doing it because I preached on this. But here's what I'm going to beg you to do. Will you take some initiative please? Listen, it doesn't have to be complex. Why don't, once a week, you just get the family together and just read a little Bible passage together and talk? You don't have to be a biblical genius. You don't even have to have any insight; just read the text and go, "What do you think?...Me too. Let's pray..." Just take some initiative. Will you? Will you take some initiative? That's all I'm asking. Just take a step or two. That's all I'm asking.

I want to talk to the women in here to close for about five minutes. Don't demand this of your husband. If you do, you'll destroy any chance he has at becoming this. Let me tell you why. If he takes a little bit of initiative and you critique him, you'll shut him down and you'll become your worst enemy; you will put him in a no win situation where he's trying and you continue to dog him. Just pray. And then I heard this a couple of weeks ago from one of my heroes. He said, "Here's a great idea. When everything's going well and you're getting along well and you've slept well and there's not a lot of pressure, when that day comes, take your husband to lunch, take him to dinner, sit him down and go, "I would love it if you would do this. I would love it if you could do this for our family. I would love it if you would lead out more in this," without demands, without ultimatums, that you would just say, "I would love it if you would do this for our family. I'd absolutely love it."

And then, I'll give you wives another secret. You have an unbelievably powerful voice when it comes to your man. Like, here's what I'd tell you. If one of you comes up afterwards and corners me and tells me how bad this sermon was and that you'll never come back, I'll probably go, "I like Valley Creek. Valley Creek's a great church. Kevin Edwards is the pastor there. I'll all him and tell him you're coming. See ya!" Now, I'm saying that if you're being out of control. If you've got a legitimate, "Hey, talk to me about this...Why would you say it this way?," then I'm not talking about that, but I'm just talking. I'm a fighter. I've never been afraid of conflict. I don't look for it, but I'm not scared if it shows up. You're not going to say anything that makes me lay in bed at night and go, "Oh, I hate that....Oh, I just..." You're just not going to be able to do it. But my wife can, with one careless word, suck the life out of me. And at the same time, with one encouraging word, she can fill my tank full. Like the times that we've been in the car and she's randomly turned to me and said, "Thank you for this. Thank you for this. You do this well for our family. Thank you." All of a sudden, my tank is full. Will you be your husband's advocate instead of dooming him to death in the desert being a better option to living with you? Will you encourage him? Let me dog him for the next couple of weeks, and you encourage him.

So we've been called by God to be the initiators, to love our wives as Christ loves the church, to nourish and cherish them. Christ help us all. Let's pray, "Father, help us. We'll need it. I pray against discouragement right now. I pray against the man who would feel that he's failed too much. I thank You that there is nothing in this room, no hurt, no betrayal, there's nothing in this room that You cannot heal and reconcile. Will You help us believe it? I pray for men. I know that what we've been called to cultivate will war against us. I know this is more complicated than we've made it and that it's more difficult than I've made it. But I know You ask us to do nothing that You don't provide the power for. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."