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THAT LONG CONVERSATION Colossians 3:18-19

Maybe you have seen the video where a husband and wife are talking. She is clearly not feeling well. He is concerned as she talks about the pain she is experiencing, a terrible pain in her head that at times is sharp and at other times is like this ache, but it never goes away. You don't see her entire face, but she clearly is hurting, and her husband wants to help. Then the camera pans back and you can see that the woman has a nail sticking in her forehead. When she finally pauses the husband says, "Well, maybe if we took that nail out..." She interrupts him and says, "you always do this. I share my feelings and you always try to solve the problem. Why can't you just listen and understand what I'm feeling." He says, "Well, I understand, but that nail..." She cuts him off again and says, "why must you always talk about that nail?"

Obviously it is a humorous attempt to portray the communication issues that often seem to come into play between husbands and wives. Yes, husbands have a tendency to try to solve when what they need to do is listen. On the other hand, if your head is killing you because there's a nail sticking in it isn't it reasonable to take the nail out? French writer Andre Maurois said "A happy marriage is like a long conversation which always seems too short." But that video suggests that conversation can be complicated sometimes. Today we are going to continue our study of marriage from Colossians 3:18-19. The perfect marriage in two easy lessons. Or not. But God does have important truth for us to remember as we seek to create marriages that are, as we learned last week, works of art, for that is exactly what God wants for us and the human heart both wants and needs.

HUSBANDS WOULD LOVE THEIR WIVES TO GET THIS

Last week we looked at some general concepts that are crucial to building a strong marriage. We saw that central to a happy marriage is having a mission that both spouses are committed to. That mission is to make their marriage a living picture of God's love for his people. In order to accomplish that mission both spouses must give up serving themselves and live to serve the other partner. This week we will continue looking at Paul's instruction to husbands and wives.

We begin with the incendiary command for wives to submit to their husbands. Remember that both this and Paul's instruction to the husbands really boil down to a command to put your spouse first. Remember that submitting is not being

brainless, it is not being a punching bag, it is choosing to say to your husband “I want to serve you and meet your needs.” We must also keep in mind that that Paul told the husbands that they were to give themselves up for their wives, in other words, saying they too were to serve their wives. The husband leads by loving his wife, meaning, putting his wife first and serving her.

So both spouses are denying self and seeking to serve the other. If that’s so why didn’t Paul just give one command that applied to both? Why did he specifically tell wives to submit? There are some scholars who claim that this is a function of Paul’s patriarchal culture. Women were mistreated and powerless in that culture so this command comes right out of that mindset. If that was the mindset of Paul’s culture why did Paul have to teach women to submit? Paul had to tell wives to submit because there were a lot of wives who didn’t want any part of that. More important, we believe Paul was inspired by God, and if that’s the case then this is not a cultural matter. This has something to do with God’s will. Paul affirms that this is the case by tacking on to his command, “as is fitting in the Lord.” In other words, this is not about culture, this is about something that God wants to happen. But we must always ask why God commands us to do certain things. It is because he loves us and wants our good. This command is given to wives so that they can experience good. It comes from God’s love.

That may be true, but I still don’t get why if both husbands and wives are doing the same thing, putting the other first, why focus on wives submitting? I suggest that’s because it has something to do with how a wife can minister to and serve her husband. The submission has to do with something that men need from their wives. We get a sense of this in Ephesians 5:33. That verse is the conclusion of a longer passage on marriage. Paul concludes his instruction on marriage in Ephesians 5 saying, “Each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” That’s the heart of the matter. God wants the wife to respect her husband. Paul focused on this idea of submitting as a way of putting her husband first because it is a way of showing respect.

Current studies reveal that in general men long for 3 particular things from their wives. I’m going to touch on all 3 of them. The first is **respect and affirmation**. Ladies, your husband is dying to know that you respect him. That, I believe, is why Paul keyed on this idea of submission. The way you can love and serve him is to communicate to him that you believe in him, you admire him and you are willing to follow his leadership because you respect him so. People get hung up on power and control in this submission thing. That is not the point at all. This is all about serving by respecting. It says, “I could care less about power and control. What I

care about is love, and I'm choosing to love my husband by respecting him and communicating that respect in actions and words."

I can hear the objection now, because I've heard it too many times from women. "But what if I don't respect him? What if I don't respect him because he's proven unworthy of it? What if I've learned that if I don't take control he'll do one stupid thing after another and it's up to me to save us?" I will suggest two things many women do not get. First, this is a **command** in the Bible. What does that tell you? It means you can choose to obey or disobey. You have a choice in whether you respect your husband or not. Perhaps you can think of it this way, you can choose to show him respect. You can choose to trust him, and tell him you're putting your confidence in him.

Second, this may require faith. The question before us is not really whether you wives can trust your husbands. It is whether you can trust God. This is undeniably a command. Do you believe that if you obey God he will be faithful and will bring about your good? The question really isn't whether you can trust your husband, it's whether you can trust God to take care of you when you do what he says.

Desire for respect is not limited to men. It is a very human trait. In fact it is an essential basis for healthy relationships. Man or woman, disrespect us and we get angry. But men are especially in need of this affirmation and respect. Oh, so you're saying that men have big male egos that need to be built up and stroked and that women are supposed to do that? How does that fit with the command we saw earlier in Colossians that humility is important?

This is not about pride, conceit and ego. There is something else at work here. Have you ever been down on a football field just before or even during a big football game? If you step back and look at what goes on you will see that it's almost funny. You'll see some of the most ridiculous behavior. There's all this yelling, grunting, growling and banging going on as the players psych up and the adrenaline flows. What's that all about? I've got one word for you – testosterone. Football is the epitome of contact sports. It requires physicality, aggression and courage, the very stuff of testosterone. If you're going to play football you're going to have to be able to take pain and you're going to have to go out there and hit somebody – hard. The harder the better. That requires toughness and aggressiveness, the kinds of things that are generated by testosterone.

So here's my question: do you think that testosterone thing was a mistake? Is God looking at those football players and thinking, "you know, if I had it to do all over

again I'd really scale back that particular hormone because those guys are acting like they're crazy"? Do you think he's surprised by how that comes out in men? I submit to you that God put that in men on purpose. Part of God's design for men included aggression. It included men being fierce, courageous, heroic and strong. It is built into guys because that's what it takes for them to fulfill the role God has given them. Let me state it clearly, it is not a mistake.

God has given men a role, whether we like it or not, and that role is to lead, to initiate, to go out into the world and fight the battle for good, to fight the battle for our wives and children. To carry out that role requires that initiative, that aggressiveness, that drive to stand and deliver. Every man knows that a real man comes through and can be counted on when times are tough.

Hold on. I get that men needed that aggressiveness when they lived out on the prairie or in the wild and they had to hunt for food, protect the family from predators, build a log cabin, carve a field for crops out of the forest and do all that manly kind of stuff. God put that in men so that the species could survive in the hardships of humanity's early existence. But I live in the wilds of Carlsbad. I do battle with a computer. Doesn't seem to be a big need for all that testosterone there. Garrison Keillor has an essay on this in *The Book of Guys*. He made a list titled "Useful Things I Can Do." On it he wrote, "Be nice. Make a bed. Dig a hole. Write books. Sing bass. Read a map. Drive a car." Then he made a list of "Useful Things I Can't Do." "Chop down trees and cut them into lumber or firewood. Handle a horse, train a dog, or tend a herd of animals. Handle a boat without panicking others. Throw a fastball, curve or slider. Load, shoot and clean a gun. Or bow and arrow. Or use either of them, or a spear, net, snare, boomerang or blowgun to obtain meat. Defend myself with my bare hands." He says, "Maybe that's an okay report card for a person...for a guy, it's not good."

In those words you get a glimpse of why men, maybe more so today than ever, need respect from their wives. We're not out there physically defending our families, fighting for them, carving a life for them out of the wilderness. More and more in today's society a man doesn't even need to be the breadwinner. We mostly aren't required to do very manly things and that feeds into a suspicion that we can't do them. Men's great fear is that we can't do it. We fear that we will be exposed, revealed to be an imposter. In his book, *Wild At Heart* (p. 46), John Eldredge wrote a powerful and very true statement. "Every man feels that the world is asking him to be something he doubts very much he has it in him to be. This is universal. I have yet to meet an honest man who won't admit it."

No, in our culture a lot of manly, aggressive, testosterone fueled skills are not needed for physical survival. But God still has a role for men to play that requires manliness and strength. Men are called by God to take initiative, to lead in loving their wives and children, to take a stand for what is right in our world, in the marketplace, in the church, to fight the spiritual battle. He calls on us to be examples to our families of courage, strength, goodness, kindness, godliness, integrity and love. He calls on us to be men our families can trust and count on at all times. And deep down we're as afraid that we don't have what that as we are that we could never fend for our families in the wild.

Men try all manner of things to cover this up, to convince themselves and others that they have what it takes. They try feats of strength and courage, dominating success in the market place, bravado, conquest, competition, shows of confidence, but all of that is covering up that fear, that sense that I don't have what it takes and if I'm not careful, someone is going to find out and expose me.

Wives, in a way, represent a great threat to men. Guys can impress others with their strength, their courage, their ability, but you live with a wife and you discover that she *knows you*. She sees who you really are. Your bluster, your bravado, your success, your image, does not fool her for a moment. You are laid bare to her, vulnerable, and all she needs to do to destroy you is confirm your fears. She simply needs to communicate that you don't have what it takes, so she'd better take over and run the show before you bring destruction on us all.

No, this isn't about ego. It isn't about power or control. It is really about fear and insecurity. I find all too often that wives do not understand that their criticisms, their expressions of exasperation, their communicating a lack of confidence in their husbands either verbally or by trying to wrest control from them, are poking at an open wound and driving their husbands to retreat, pull away from them. Wives you can be miracle workers by believing in, trusting, respecting and affirming your husbands. That's really what Paul is saying when he tells you to submit. In their book, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*, Les and Leslie Parrott wrote, (p. 105), "When a man does not receive admiration from his spouse, he begins to lose his motivation to try... You have no idea how damaging a critical statement is to your man's personal power."

There's a second thing that men deeply desire from their wives. That factor is one women can identify with. It is *intimacy*. Yes, men desire intimacy. However, women and men don't always experience intimacy in the same ways. When women think of intimacy they think in terms of sharing deepest secrets, sharing the

deepest yearnings and thoughts of one another. While men do need and desire those things, they actually experience bonding in a different way. They experience it more through shared activity than talking deeply over a long lunch or dinner.

A few years ago I was talking with Toby, who at the time was single and had cut back his hockey playing from 4 nights a week to only 2 nights a week. We were reminiscing about a hockey team we had played on together with a number of guys from the church. He began telling me about a league he had seen that is a really slow league. In other words, the guys in it aren't very good. He said, "Dad, you could easily play in that league. You should get back into it and play." I have always loved sports, and now that I am old one of the things I really miss is playing team sports. But I found I wasn't tempted even a little to check out that league. And I realized that one of the things I enjoyed most about sports was being part of a team of guys that I connect with. Maybe that's in part because I've never been very good at anything so it's never been just about playing the game for me. But I found the idea of going out and playing the game with a bunch of guys I don't know once a week wasn't all that appealing. My point here is that what I long for is the connection of being part of a team. Time and time again I have heard former professional athletes who have retired respond when asked what they miss about the game say, "I miss being part of the team."

Your husband longs for someone he can be part of a team with, someone he can do things with, someone he can play with. He longs to have a buddy. While it may not feel to you women like a big deal, to him that is a connection that is soul filling. Again I will quote the Parrotts' book, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* (p. 108). They say, "Husbands place surprising importance on having their wives as recreational companions."

That's why it is crucial that the two of you are clear on your mission and that you be working toward that together. That's a shared activity that can knit your hearts together. But I want to encourage you to think about how you can participate with your husband. That could be anything from gardening, to playing tennis or golf, to hiking, to getting into watching the Padres on television. I have to tell you that I have the greatest wife in history. She learned how to ice skate because I played hockey. She learned how to play tennis so we could play together. Though she was never a baseball person, because of my love for the game she has taken an interest in it. I remember a couple of years ago we were watching a Padres game. At a crucial moment in a close game the Padre pitcher had two strikes on the batter. He threw his next pitch and the batter crushed it for a two run homer that would win the game for the other team. Instantly Laurie cried out, "What was he doing? Why

did he throw him a fastball rather than a slider there?” I thought, “I love this woman!” Do you see what happened? She knew enough that she thought through pitch selection. With two strikes the batter was primed to swing at a slider low and away that he would either miss or hit weekly for an out. She knew that. And she recognized the pitch as a fastball, not a slider. Amazing. This is a woman who it is impossible not to love.

There is one last thing that husbands deeply desire. You’ve no doubt heard the expression, “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.” News flash: no it isn’t. I don’t want to be indelicate here, but if you want to really put your husband first, start with **sex**. Why are men so hung up on sex? Well, there’s that testosterone thing again. In other words, you can blame it on God. This is the way he made men. Once again, it is my contention that God didn’t make a mistake with this one.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5 says, “The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but yields it to her husband. In the same way the husband does not have authority over his body, but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

That is a powerful passage. Spouses give up authority over their own body to each other. There is that message of giving up self, a message so foreign to our culture. You have a duty to each other, and that duty is sex. Sounds like a duty most men will be eager to report for. Paul says don’t deprive each other. That’s a command. Maybe, he says, maybe you can forego sex for a little while, but not long. This is the word of God commanding husbands and wives to have sex. So this is a matter of obedience to God, for both husbands and wives.

On more than one occasion Laurie has said to other women, “Rick doesn’t need me to be his mother or his manager. He needs me to be his cheerleader, his playmate and his lover.” All I can say is my wife is brilliant.

WIVES WOULD LOVE THEIR HUSBANDS TO GET THIS

The late President Lyndon Johnson once said, “I have learned that only two things are necessary to keep one’s wife happy. First, let her think that she’s having her own way. And second, let her have it.” Wives really don’t want to dominate their husbands. But what do they want?

Paul tells husbands that they should love their wives and “not be harsh with them.” Isn’t it distressing that Paul had to clarify that loving a wife means not being harsh with her? Sadly the history of men being harsh with wives, even abusing them, is long indeed. And it has no part of what it means to love a wife.

If you have ever or do ever lay a hand on your wife, men, except to gently express affection, if you have in any way physically abused your wife you are disobeying God. There is no place in love for such horror. A man is called to give himself up for his wife, and if you are bursting out in anger at her either verbally or physically, you are most definitely not loving her. Stop immediately and get help. Confess your wrong to her.

But let’s be clear that being harsh can take more forms than abuse. You can be harsh in your tone of voice or your expression. Maybe your wife has said something to you that expresses irritation at you. What do you do? It is so easy to fire right back at her with an edge in your voice or with some cutting comment. That’s being harsh. You can be harsh by being impatient, a problem common for husbands. You can be harsh by being insensitive and ignoring her needs or her feelings. In the English Standard translation 1 Peter 3:7 says, “Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman.” To live with her in an understanding way is to be sensitive to her. If you are not sensitive to her, if you do not honor her, you are being harsh.

A couple of years ago when my brother retired from his job as a pastor in the Seattle area Laurie and I flew up for the big celebration his church had for him. We went to church on Sunday morning then I spent the afternoon with Jerry while Laurie spent the day with her family. We were going to all meet at the church that night for the big celebration. The church had seats saved for Laurie and me in the first row. The church was pretty much packed. As the time arrived for the event to begin I was sitting in the front row, but no Laurie. She was late. They opened the program, but very early in the program they had asked that Laurie and I come up on the platform and share a few thoughts about Jerry. The time for that part of the program arrived, they called us up to the platform, but no Laurie. I was frustrated. We’d flown to Seattle to be there at this event, and Laurie couldn’t show up in time to play her part in it. I had to go up in front of that crowd and explain that Laurie wouldn’t be able to share because she was late, then I said, “that’s why I call her the late Laurie Myatt.” That was not loving my wife. That was harsh. I was most assuredly not looking out for her and honoring her. It got even better. I was to learn that part of the reason she was late was that she was having physical problems that would lead to surgery a month later. What a guy, huh?

Men, we are called to lead in our homes. How are we to lead? We are to lead by being examples of what it means to sacrifice ourselves in order to love our wives and children. That's what it means to be a man. It is not waiting for your wife to take the first step. It is initiating love and kindness 24 hours a day, rain or shine, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. There are no vacations from being a man who is given the task by God of leading in love. There is no excused absence; there is no blaming our choices on the failures of others, there is no deciding that she doesn't deserve it. You are a man, so stand and deliver by sacrificing yourself and loving like a man.

What a profound calling. A husband is to say to his wife and his children, "watch me and follow my example. Here is what it means to love with an unconditional, unfailing, sacrificial, continually gentle and serving love." Do you remember when Jesus talked about leading in his church what he said? He said it's not about exercising authority. It's not about ruling people, knowing everything, telling people what to do, being in control. It's about serving. It's becoming the servant of all. Everyone in the family should feel like the one thing they know for sure is the husband and dad totally sacrifices to care for them, and he does it joyfully, unstintingly day after day no matter how they act.

Pastor Andy Stanley tells of a time that he went to Washington D.C. to be in a friend's wedding. After the rehearsal the wedding party of 12 all went out. At one point one of the young single women turned to Andy and said, "I heard a preacher say that the husband is supposed to be the head of the home. Is that what you believe, that the man is the head of the woman?" He said to her, "Imagine you're married to a man who believes you are the most fantastic person on the planet. He's crazy about you and he makes that obvious to you and everyone else. You have no doubt that your happiness is his highest priority. He listens when you talk. He honors you in public. He cherishes you. He's not afraid to make a decision. He values your opinions. He leads, but he listens. He's responsible. He's not argumentative. He's patient and kind even when you're not. You have no doubt that he would give his life for you without hesitation if somehow the need arose. You have not even a hint of a worry that he would ever be unfaithful to you because he is so devoted to you." As he was talking all other conversation around the table had ceased as all listened to what he was saying. He paused then asked, "Would you have trouble following a man like that?" She blurted out, "Are you kidding. I want to meet that guy." Men, we are to be that guy.

In Ephesians 5:27 after saying Jesus loved his church and gave himself up for her Paul said he did it to present to himself “a radiant church.” That was the model he gave for us guys in relating to our wives. Our goal is to make our wives radiant. The goal is that our wives would feel so loved and cherished that the joy in their hearts cannot be contained, but just radiates to everyone they encounter. How do we do that? In their book, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* (p. 46), Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott wrote, “the most important element of romantic passion for...wives is to feel special.”

What makes a woman’s heart sing is when she knows that the most important thing in her husband’s heart is the Lord Jesus, and that the next thing is his wife. She wants to know that she is precious to you and that nothing competes with her place in your heart. Of course if you have kids she desperately wants you to love them fiercely, but she wants you to love her even more than them.

It touches her soul when in the middle of a busy day you call her and say, “I’ve just been thinking about you. You are always on my mind.” It touches her soul when you demonstrate that you are in fact thinking about her. The classic husband error is to forget the anniversary or her birthday. What does that say to her? It doesn’t matter to me. It says a lot to her when you not only remember it but actually plan to celebrate that special day because she is special.

There’s a combination of a couple of traits that Laurie and I have that can lead to a husband fail. One of Laurie’s qualities is that she’s very much present in the moment wherever she is. She has kind of a stream of consciousness continual approach to life, so that when we are together her tendency is to be constantly communicating to me. Unfortunately one of my traits is that I can focus and tune out extraneous distractions quite well. So we’re at the breakfast table and I’m reading the newspaper. The focus light is on. Anything going on outside what I’m reading gets screened as extraneous noise. Yeah you can see where this is going. It doesn’t make my wife feel special to be classified as extraneous noise. I hate that moment when something clicks in my head and I realize that what has been filtered out is my wife’s voice and that it has been going on for some time, and I have no idea what she’s talking about. That doesn’t make her radiant.

Few things will make your wife radiant more than listening to her. Like the video in the introduction today, we know that what women want most of all is to be heard, to be listened to without judgment, to be understood. To be a leader in love, men, you need to engage. You need to expend effort to know what is happening in your wife’s life. Make your wife the subject of serious study and investigation. Do

you know what her shoe sizes and clothing sizes are? Do you know what her favorite stores are? Do you know what she would love for you to do around the house? Are you willing to do it? Do you know who her friends are and what's happening in their lives? Do you know what her fears and her dreams are?

Not long ago Laurie saw a commercial for a new Disney movie. It was called *Cinderella*. Wait, Cinderella? How is that new? It has been around forever. Well this is a remake, and Laurie instantly said that she had to see it. You know that expression, "I've seen this movie before"? Well I've seen that movie before. The glass slipper did it. Why would we want to see that story again? When our daughter was young I believe between the musical and the animated version we watched that story 9,562 times. Are there any airplanes in the movie? No. Are there any sports scenes? No. Does anything get blown up? No. Is this a movie that any human possessing a Y chromosome wants to see? No. Maybe what they should have done was have the evil stepmother be a Nazi spy and... Wait, you're trying to turn *Cinderella* into a guy movie? Okay, that's totally futile, isn't it? However, I know that story touches something way down deep in my wife's heart. I chose to love her instead of serve myself. I actually planned for us to go see the movie, and I went with a good attitude. That's what love does. It means I want Laurie to feel like she's Cinderella, the one who turns heads at the ball, the one whose prince has shown up and he loves her with all his heart forever so she can live happily ever after. To love means saying no to self and yes to serving.

There's one more thing you can do men that will speak to the heart of your wife. She longs for you to be the hero she's always wanted. She wants you to be a man she is proud of. That doesn't mean you need to make a lot of money. It doesn't mean you need to be powerful or famous or macho. It means you need to have unimpeachable character. She longs for you to be a man who has a great heart, a man she can admire because of his patience, his kindness, his integrity, his courage, his goodness, his tenderness and his love. And that will only be complete if you are a man who loves God and leads her and your children to do the same.

CONCLUSION

MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE THE PRIORITY

This past week I called an airline because I had to change a reservation we had set up for a trip later this year. I tried to do it online but the airline website said this particular reservation couldn't be handled online. So I called and after navigating the extremely annoying recorded menus to get to existing reservations I was put on hold. Then came the crowning moment. After hearing repeatedly that my call was important to them I was informed that the wait time would be one hour!

What would you conclude after having already spent 10 minutes with their annoying system when you are told the wait time will be another hour? I concluded that they're lying when they say my call is important to them. If it were important they would ANSWER THE STUPID PHONE! Here's what I know. People, including corporations, which are collections of people, do what is important to them. When we say something is important, when we say it is a priority, others can gauge how honest we are about that by whether we actually do the thing we *say* is important. If my call really is important then the airline will hire more people to talk to customers in some reasonable amount of time. What they said to me was "We could care less about you. Go away and don't bother us. We don't have time for you and your problem, whatever it is."

If your marriage is the priority next to obeying God, then you will put the effort and resources necessary into doing whatever it takes to nourish, protect and sustain it. You will say no to other things. A lot will try to distract you. Refuse to let them compromise this priority. That means finding ways to serve your spouse. It means listening to your spouse. It means finding ways to share life with your spouse. It means finding ways to understand and accept your spouse.

Gary Chapman wrote a best selling book a few years back titled *The 5 Love Languages*. In it he identified different ways we express love, such as quality time together, physical affection, giving gifts, acts of service and words of affirmation. He made the point that we each have ways that particularly make us feel loved. There is truth in his premise, but I have one issue with it. I want them all. In fact, if even one of them is missing in how Laurie loves me I will notice it. So here's a way you can make an effort to strengthen your marriage. Think about how you can provide each of those expressions of love for your spouse.

LIVE BY THE THREE LAWS OF LOVE

Everybody knows the three laws of real estate are location, location, location. Well love has three laws too. The three laws of love are affirm, affirm, affirm.

John Gottman is a psychologist who has made married couples the focus of his life's work. He's an amazing guy. He can look at 3 minutes of a video of a married couple conversing and predict with 90% accuracy the future of their relationship. There are a couple of keys that he looks for. One is contempt. When he sees spouses who are critical of each other and have contempt for one another he knows the marriage is doomed. He has observed that in happy couples there is a minimum of 5 positive interactions, 5 affirmations, for every negative between the spouses.

All of us have an assessment of ourselves and our value that is a result of many verdicts that have been passed along to us over the course of our lives by parents, siblings, friends, boyfriends or girlfriends, coaches, teachers, bosses and co-workers. Seeing our own shortcomings often that assessment is most scathing because of our own disappointment in ourselves. As a spouse you have the opportunity to challenge and even overturn all of that. You have incredible power. Your affirmation can count for more than all of it. Proverbs 18:21 says, “the tongue has the power of life and death.” You can give life to your spouse with your affirmation.

Here’s what I see about myself, and what I’ve heard through the years. Kind of a dorky looking guy. Nothing special about him. Not very athletic. Not much of a leader, not much of a talent when it comes to his ministry. I don’t hear any of that from my wife. She claims I’m good looking. She has said on numerous occasions that even the way I move on fields of play reveal athleticism and coordination. Of much more importance she claims she has more admiration for me than anyone she knows, that she thinks I am a terrific husband, dad, and leader. I hear that from her constantly. She hasn’t convinced me completely. I see pictures of myself and think, “wow, not just a dork but now an old dork.” But what’s important is, it doesn’t matter. What matters to me is what Laurie thinks. It counts more than what the rest of the world thinks.

DRAW FROM GOD

Recently someone wrote a check to us that bounced. That was a reminder of the fact that banks have a curious trait. They don’t pay money out if you don’t have money in your account. And we can’t pay love out if we don’t have love in our account. We try to get love from other people so we can love back, but we’ll never have enough that way. God’s love goes beyond comprehension. It goes beyond our ability to drain it. It is always there, ever flowing. What we need to do is each day keep drawing on his infinite love, then let it flow through us right into our spouses, no matter how they are acting or feeling.