

Good Morning! I'm glad that you're here today as we continue our series on "A New Attitude!" Today as we celebrate Father's Day, we want to look at how to get a new or improved attitude in our homes. You may think the title that I've chosen for today is a little strange, "She Ain't Heavy." Maybe it is. But let me explain where it comes from.

In three weeks when we are celebrating the 4th of July, people from all around the world will gather in Finland for the 16th annual "Wife Carrying World Championships." It is a race in which a husband has to carry his wife who weighs at least 108 pounds around a 300 yard obstacle course. The track runs over sand, grass, and asphalt. It has two dry and two water obstacles. The Finnish organizers claim that the competition has historical roots going back to the 1800s when a local bandit accepted partners in crime only after they proved their worth on an obstacle course. In those days it was a common practice to steal animals or young women from neighboring villages. The fastest couple around the course wins a man-lugging-wife trophy and the wife's weight in beer. When the Wall Street Journal wrote an article about this competition the headline read, "She's Not Heavy, She's My Wife." So now you know where the title comes from.

But what is the connection to Father's Day and our text in Ephesians 5? This is one of the most misunderstood and controversial readings in the Bible. But if you look at what the reading really says, one point is clear. The Apostle Paul places a lot on the shoulders of the husband. He exhorts husbands to love their wives sacrificially. Some women today may resent the idea that they need to be carried in any way, shape or form. But the truth is we all need a little help from time to time. It is not a put down, it is a partnership. It doesn't make someone a second rate citizens, it means that they are loved. And don't we all want and need to be loved?

The key verse for us to look at today is Ephesians 5:25. "**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**" Paul compares the relationship of a husband and wife to Jesus and His Church. When we look at marriage that way, we get a picture of the total commitment God wants us to make in marriage. Jesus was totally committed to us. His whole life was dedicated to one purpose, restoring rebellious people back to God's family. Jesus didn't let anything stand in His way. He didn't let threats deter him. He didn't let temptations distract him. He didn't let friends discourage him. Jesus carried our sins with Him all the way to the cross. He lifted that burden off our shoulders and set us free to be His own special people, part of His family we call the Church.

Husbands are told to love their wives in the same way. What great security that would give to marriages today if Christian men would do that their wives, as the Lord commands. As a society,

we love to break things down. If you break down the Lord's command to husband, it tells us that a husband's love should be about sacrifice.

I've had the privilege of seeing that in a number of families. Let me tell you about one. I've been invited to the 50th wedding anniversary of a friend in the Dexter Rotary Club. Long before I meet him 10 years ago, his wife has had a series of serious health problems that has demanded special care, time and attention. Jim, who is a Christian, has given his wife the help, love and support that she has needed through all of this even when it has demanded great personal sacrifice. He has helped literally to carry his wife for a good part of their 50 years together. He should be this year's winner of the Wife Carrying Contest.

A husband's love should be about partnership. God created Eve to be a partner for Adam. They were created to compliment and complete each other. When a man and women get married, they enter into a partnership. God's plan is that it be a lifelong partnership. Good partners look out for each other, work for the good of each other, support and encourage each other.

A husband's love should also be about caring. We can show someone that we care for them in a variety of ways. We express love and receive love in a variety of ways. We can care for others by spending quality time with them. That means turning off the TV, the cell phone, and putting down the paper. It means focusing our attention exclusively on that one person. We can also share words of encouragement. We all need to be encouraged. In a world that tears us down, that tells us we are not good enough, we need someone who will love us for who we are and encourage us to be our best. We care when we give meaningful gifts. We can show that we care with appropriate physical touch. And we care when we serve.

So what does any of this have to with Father's Day? The answer is simple, one of the best ways to be a loving father is to be a loving husband first. Men, we have to love our wives first if we want to show love to our kids. It is that simple. If we don't, we're going to have problems in the home that will have a negative effect on our children. Wouldn't it be great if our children grew up learning to do as we do, to love as we love, to model themselves after loving parents in a loving home!

Dads, let your sons learn how to treat a woman by watching the way you honor their mother and treat her with love and respect. Dads, help your daughters learn to expect that the men that they date will treat them like you have treated their Mom with gentleness and faithfulness. Dads, show your kids that you love them by giving your time, your attention and your affection to them. Despite what they might tell you, they don't need more stuff. They need more of the good stuff that they can only get by you investing yourself in them.

To put it quite simply dads, we have to learn how to love from Christ and to love like Christ.
Happy Father's Day! Amen.