

1 Peter: Living Hope Series
Week 8: Husbands and Wives
1 Peter 3:1-7
June 1, 2014

DISMISS KIDS FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH IF HAVEN'T ALREADY!!

Welcome/intro stuff

If it's your first or second or third time joining us, thanks so much for being here this morning, been hoping you might come or come back and join us

I missed y'all last week, but I heard good things about your time here with Jay Thomas from Chapel Hill Bible Church

If you're just joining us we're a couple weeks into a series called "Living Hope" as we spend these next ten weeks or so looking at the New Testament book or really letter of 1 Peter

And at the very beginning of 1 Peter we get two sentences

That answers life's greatest question: "what's the meaning of life?"

And over the course of our time looking at this book we're memorizing together these two sentences that give us the Bible's answer to one of life's biggest and most important questions

Let's put it up here and read it together:

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade

Over the past couple of weeks, Peter has moved from sort of the theologian and teacher to life-coach

He's taking all this great and rich teaching on Jesus' resurrection from the dead and our new names and identities in Christ

And he's applying that to real-life situations that the people he's writing to in the 1st century are facing

And in this section of Scripture, Peter's life-coaching them in four specific areas:

1. Relationship with human authorities (two weeks ago)
2. Slaves and masters (last week)
3. Husbands and wives (this week)

4. Living as a persecuted community (next week)

And at the very beginning of Peter's life-coaching instructions, he give us his thesis statement, here's Peter's goal with all of his life-coaching instruction:

12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Peter's whole goal is missional and evangelistic—he wants the people in the churches to speak the love language of the culture so that they might see, hear and understand the goodness of the God

And the word that he uses in all four of these sections that Americans stumble over all the time is the word “submission”

For most Americans, the word “submission” is sure to get that same type of negative reaction—like when I tell my kids we're having lima beans for dinner just to get a negative reaction out of them!

But Peter uses the word in all four of his life-coaching sessions so we need to get our minds around what the Bible means by the word submission

Biblically submission It Ain't:

- Being forced into something
- Fearful, cowering, weak, pitiful

Biblically:

Submission: ***A deliberate and voluntary laying down of rights, power, and authority for the sake of the greater good of God's mission to reconcile, restore, and heal all things in Jesus***

We went into much greater detail two weeks ago and if you weren't here we did a whole rehab session around this important word you should go to our web site and watch or listen to the message from 2 weeks ago

And today, we get to talk about marriage! Now, the passages that we're going to read today contain some of the most disputed ideas in the Scriptures

For some of you this issue brings up all sorts of baggage because of how you've heard or seen people use these texts and these passages in ways that were abusive or unhealthy or unholy

For others of you, you're divorced or divorced and re-married and this stuff brings up all kinds of stuff from the past and the present

If you're not a church person at all, what we're going to read today might shock you that anyone would ever even think that this could be actually directly applied in 21st century America

It might sound not just irrelevant and antiquated but maybe even offensive.

And even among us church people, we've got all kinds of people here in this church who interpret these Scriptures in different ways

SO, what I want to do is pitch a VERY BIG TENT

Last weekend over Memorial day weekend my family and I went camping with some friends at Jordan Lake overnight on Sunday night

The thing about camping is that whether you're going for one night or six, you've got the same amount of packing to do!

I was like "if we're going to go through all this hassle, let's just stay there at Jordan lake all week!"

Several years ago Kelly's parents gave us a HUGE tent—it sleeps like 8 people and has a narthex and a ping-pong table room and an apartment over the garage.

Between the two families we had 5 kids, so what we did last weekend was we pitched that big tent and had the kids all crash together

And they totally loved it and had a blast!

Here's my goal this morning: to pitch ONE big tent where we can all gather together and live together in community

even if we disagree over how to apply and live out these passages

I want to create a good space for us to be able to winsomely and generously and honestly engage with the Scriptures, hear what they have to say to us

And be able to have productive conversations that honor one another and care for one another

as we wrestle with the Scriptures, what they're saying, what they mean, and what it all means for us today in our marriages

Let's read the passage from Peter and just to make sure we're keeping Peter's goal in mind, let's start with his goal again from verse 12:

12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

And now here's how Peter instructs his people to regarding a marriage that is so good and so rich that speaks to the larger culture the goodness of God and points to him

Wives, in the same way [just like we talked about with human authorities and slaves and masters] submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

³ Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴ Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

⁷ Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Pre-marital counseling story: "If I have to call him Lord, I'm not sure I'm up for this!"

Okay, so here's what I'm going to do today as I'm wanting to pitch that big tent and invite us together to read the Scriptures, discuss, disagree, and live out of and apply this Scripture faithfully

What I'm going to do is START with what we all agree on—here's what the Scripture says about how we're to relate to one another as Jesus-following people:

All are called to love (1 Corinthians 13) and serve one another (John 13)

All are called to not lie to one another (Colossians 3), to forgive one another (Colossians 3), to live in humility and to consider others better than ourselves (Phil. 2), to encourage, teach, and rebuke each other (Col. 3)

To not speak harshly or coarsely with one another (Ephesians 5)

To be united together in the love of Christ, to be live in healthy inter-dependence with one another (neither independence nor co-dependence but healthy inter-dependence) where our gifts serve and build up one another (1 Cor 12?)

We submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5)—there's that lima bean word again!

We start there as the governing directives for life together as Christians and how we're to relate to one another—those are the givens

Now I want to present this BIG TENT TRIANGLE of ways that Jesus-following people have interpreted these passages about husbands and wives
Egalitarian, Complimentarian, and Trinitarian

And I'm going to as best as I can present a convincing Biblical case for each of these positions

Because I've got friends and people I love and respect who love Jesus who fall in each of these different places on the spectrum
and I want to represent each place along the TRIANGLE well

I'm hoping that by the time I get done walking through these you won't know which of the points I lean toward!

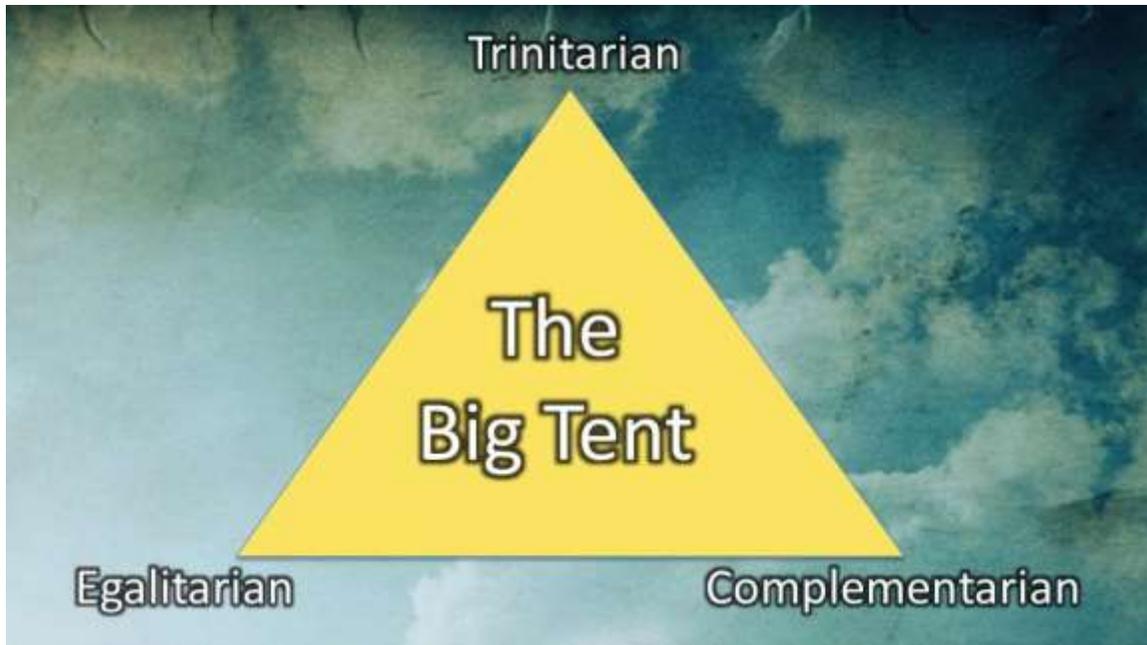
And I want to invite each of us to NOT to pick a side and draw battle lines but to really engage with the Lord over these passages and wrestle deeply with them
you need to come to your own personal conviction about what the Scriptures are saying

And then LIVE IT! Live it faithfully! in light of your convictions before the Lord and before his Scriptures in your own marriages

Because no matter where you land on this TRIANGLE, there's work to be done to love and serve as Jesus would call you to

AND I want to challenge us to live generously and lovingly in the midst of a Christian community

where the person sitting next to you might have a different conviction about how to apply and live this out



At one point of the pyramid, is what is called an Egalitarian point of view: all believers without regard to gender, ethnicity, or class must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility

The key text for this position is from Galatians 3 where Paul declares: ²⁸ ***There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.***

This, they declare, is the Magna Carta of Christianity
the key concept that eventually causes Christians to lead the charge in doing away with slavery and opening up education to girls

Therefore, any hierarchical language in the Scripture is a result of the culture of the day and that the writers are either simply reflecting their own culture—like when the Bible commands us to greet one another with a holy kiss

OR are they're doing exactly what Peter is actually doing here which is to live in a culturally appropriate way so that the gospel gets heard and listened to

[TEXT HERE]

This passage from Peter is actually a great picture of that—Peter's stated goal is that the Christians would live such good lives before the non-believing watching world that they would glorify God

In fact, Peter himself writes in the missional and evangelistic stated purpose right here:

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives

The Egalitarians say that in Peter's day the only way that Christian marriages and especially Christian wives would be respected would be if the women would submit to their husbands

If women in the 1st century became Christians and started behaving in ways that seemed uppity or culturally out of line, then Christianity would get a bad name and lose credibility

BUT if the wives submitted in 1st century, it would demonstrate and build credibility for the gospel message
starting with their own non-believing husbands and extending to the watching world.

Egalitarians argue that in our time and culture, the exact OPPOSITE is the reverse today, that if the goal is that the people around us might see our good marriages and be pointed to God

then the only way that the watching world will be impressed with Christian marriage is not another hierarchical marriage where the man is in charge
but if it operates out of the basic core Christian community of mutual love, mutual service, and mutual sacrifice that are the common commands of what it means to follow Jesus in community

They argue that a hierarchical marriage where wives are called to submit only costs the church missionally in terms of its credibility to the watching world

It sounds ridiculously out of date and oppressive and offensive to the watching world
which is the exact thing that Peter is trying to AVOID in his first century context!

AND it has been so ruinously mis-used throughout history and still today that it's been one of the biggest sources of misery in marriages all around the globe

AND fundamentally they argue that it undermines the larger affirmation of the equality of all men and women before God.

Finally, they argue, there's no gender distinction when God gives out different gifts. Both men and women have gifts of leadership, gifts of wisdom and discernment and the like

So if you've got a marriage where the wife has gifts of leadership, wisdom, and discernment and the husband DOES NOT have those gifts

Should the wife not use her gifts to bless her family and should the whole family suffer because the husband has to be the one who's in charge?

There's a large movement of men and women who are a part of a movement called "Christians for Biblical Equality" and here's how they summarize their position on men and women in the family:

The Bible teaches that husbands and wives are heirs together of the grace of life and that they are bound together in a relationship of mutual submission and responsibility (1 Cor 7:3-5; Eph 5:21; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Gen 21:12).

In the Christian home, husband and wife are to defer to each other in seeking to fulfill each other's preferences... In case of decisional deadlock they should seek resolution through biblical methods of conflict resolution rather than by one spouse imposing a decision upon the other.

In the Christian home, spouses are to learn to share the responsibilities of leadership on the basis of gifts, expertise, and availability, with due regard for the partner most affected by the decision under consideration....

They are freed to emerge from an unbiblical "traditionalism" and can rejoice in their mutual accountability in Christ. In so doing, they will openly express their obedience to Scripture, [and] will model an example for other couples in quest of freedom in Christ..

This is part of a much larger document arguing for a very equal, non-hierarchical understanding of how men and women are supposed to relate

And this document is signed by all these people [ROLL CREDITS!] who love Scripture, love Jesus, who know the original languages and culture all way better than I ever will

I've read their books, listened to their podcasts, I know some of these people personally, they've got a deep love for Scripture and for Jesus

And they've got great, healthy, beautiful marriages

And we've got people here in our church who would fall at this end of the Triangle

NOW! On this other point of the triangle are complimentarians.

These folks believe that yes, we're all called to a certain way of loving and serving one another as Christians in general in community

But within that call, there are specific roles or tasks for men and women to play in marriage

The idea here is that men and women **compliment** each other in their God-ordained roles.

And these tasks are NOT simply culturally conditioned or about what happened to be a good witness in the first century

They argue that these roles in Christian marriage are inscribed into the very DNA of every man and woman

And that when we embrace these roles, with the husband as the Jesus-following leader in the family who is supposed to serve his family through humble servant leadership

And women who are called to obviously be in relationship with their husbands and be a partner in decision-making and various day-to-day processes

But ultimately it is the call on the husband to lead the family like Christ leads the church and died for it

and the husband is ultimately accountable before God for leading or not leading his family faithfully

and ultimately it is the call to the wife to submit to the husband

Again, submission Biblically is a free and deliberate and voluntary giving over of rights, power and authority for the sake of God's mission and his work in the world

Because while *Peter's* rationale here is very much rooted in communicating the good news of Jesus to the watching world

There are other places where the reasons given for wives to submit have nothing to do with what other people might think

And everything to do with the order of the cosmos!

Here's what Paul writes in Ephesians 5:

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

There's nothing about culture or anything that's time-bound about that! At no time will the church NOT be submitting to Christ!

These folks argue that in a world where there's all kinds of confusion and chaos around marriage and gender and where marriages are being shipwrecked all over the place

Having absolute clarity about the role of men and women in marriage provides direction, truth, guidance, and God's plan for what it means to be a faithful husband or wife.

These folks point not only to Scripture in terms of making a case for God establishing an order to marriage and the family, they also make a case based on survey data

One survey a little over ten years ago looked at what happened to kids when just mom went to church, what happened when just dad goes to church, and what happens if either or both go irregularly

The results were sobering:

if just mom goes to church and dad never goes, only 2% regular and 37% irregular—39% total regularly or irregularly

If just dad goes to church, regardless of whether or not mom ever goes, between 66-75% will go to church either regularly or irregularly

They measured every scenario: dad goes irregularly no mom, mom goes regularly dad irregularly, every possible combination of mom and dad and frequency of church attendance

And at every turn it was the dad who made the biggest difference as to whether or not their children participated as adults

Side note: Dad's, this is a serious reality that you and I need to attend to—regardless of where you fall in our big-tent

What you do and how you engage spiritually and in community is not just about you, it disproportionately impacts your kids

The argument here from the complimentarians as it applies to families is simply that God has established an order to the family with the husband as the head of the house

This applies to kids and it applies to wives

and men have a disproportionate responsibility before the Lord to lead and tend to their families

with significant consequences if they do not attend to those responsibilities

There's a large group of folks called the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood who love Jesus, love Scripture, and who are eager to see healthy God-honoring marriages and here's what they say about marriage:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine **roles** are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
 1. In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 1. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

This is their stance and there's all kinds of people and churches who have signed onto THIS document

And they know the original languages better than I ever will, who know the culture and know the history and understand all kinds of things swirling around this debate

Some of whom I know and others of them I've read their books, listened to their podcasts, and I respect them greatly

And, they would argue, in spite of how not-politically-correct it sounds, this is how the world was designed

and any attempt to live otherwise is basically like saying "I don't like gravity so I'm going to try to live as if it didn't exist"

The final peg in our tent is a smaller group but I think it has much to offer the conversation.

These folks are called *Trinitarians*.

Trinitarians look to God's own unity and relational dynamics between God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

And they argue that the language of Scripture describing God as one God who is both three distinct persons but joined together

Is very similar to the way that Scripture describes marriage: one flesh, one being, but distinct persons

And the ways that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to one another are that they mutually serve and bless and point to one another

The Father SENDS US the Son and puts his Son front and center.

The Son SUBMITS to the Father and says he has come to SHOW US the Father and POINT TO the Father.

The Son promises that it's way better for us if he leaves because after he's gone we can RECEIVE the Holy Spirit

And the Father and the Son delight to pour out the Holy Spirit on God's people

And the Spirit's job is to shine the light onto Jesus and to show us Jesus and lead us to Jesus who then leads us to the Father who

There's a joyful dance of the Trinity where each of the three persons delight to serve and lift up and exalt the other two members of the trinity

And each one takes the lead in the dance in different ways in the Biblical story:

the Father LEADS in Creation the Son leads in redemption and the Holy Spirit leads in sanctification, that process of transforming us more and more into Christ-likeness

Each one participates in all three works, but there are ways that each one takes a unique role in leading in a different aspect of the work

Trinitarians critique both of the other two sides a little bit:

They have two concerns with the egalitarian movement:

2. It sounds very much like a Western capitalist democracy

The egalitarian perspective has perhaps been overly-shaped by our particular American cultural values of independence and a very flat distribution of power

Not that those are all bad—we should just be careful of importing our cultural values and personal preferences into the Scripture!

Otherwise we end up with a Christianity made in our own image and a God made in our own image

2. The way that some egalitarians interpret this passage from Galatians: ²⁸ ***There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.***

Is that to ultimately say that there is no difference or distinction between men and women at all

They just obliterate gender as irrelevant entirely, along with race and culture

And Trinitarians argue that there are distinctives and that those need to be attended to and honored rather than all blurred together

Just like the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit remain three distinct persons who are nevertheless one God in relationship with each other.

The objection to the complementarians is that the emphasis on power and authority and who submits and who gets to call the shots

ALSO sounds a whole lot like this world and how power has typically been brokered and used

The objection is that both complementarians and egalitarians take too much of their cues from the world in terms of power dynamics

BUT COMPLEMENTARIANISM especially has an OVERLY-NARROW roles definitions that need to be held a little looser otherwise fall into inane legalism
where the woman can or can't decide what's for dinner
or can or can't be the one to call the family to pray
or an or can't be the one who's job decides it's time to move

They argue that the Trinity shows us how power is to be brokered and used, God himself is showing us what it means to be in a God-honoring one-flesh relationship

Because God himself IS one God in three persons, just like Scripture describes marriage as two people in one flesh

And that relationship is mostly about mutual self-giving, others-exalting, not about fighting turf wars over who has the power and who does not.

If God is the self-giving God that he has demonstrated himself to be in Jesus, then Christian marriage should reflect this same self-giving, self-humbling, generosity between husband and wife

Okay, now that we've pitched the big tent, what I want to invite you to do is enter into this a little bit

Here's the thing—temperamentally and by your very nature, you're likely to be drawn toward one of these just because it sounds better to you

I want to challenge you to not just choose whichever one most sounds convenient or comfortable for you

but rather to really search the Scriptures and pray together with your spouse about what is TRUE

And THEN conform yourself according to the conviction of God's Spirit, not just based on which of these you happen to like

I worked with college students for 16 years and one of the things that I'd say was the most pervasive problem for many of my students was dysfunctional families

And I've been working with you old people now for two years, and in many of the marriages where there's significant problems

One of the core issues is quite simply that some people have never seen a healthy marriage before.

And for some of you, the obstacle that you're facing in growing up into a healthy marriage is quite simply you've never seen one.

And for some of you to really engage with this conversation, you need the conversation to move from abstract ideas to real concrete actions.

So here's how I want to close our last 5 minutes or so this morning—I'm going to invite my wife Kelly up here

and we're going to share a bit together about how we try to live our a faithful marriage that honors each other and honors the Lord



BIG DISCLAIMER ALERT! We are not THE perfect Christian couple. We DON'T have the perfect marriage

I've shared with y'all before about how we were in and out of counseling multiple times, especially our first five or six years of marriage

We're NOT trying to put ourselves up on some pedestal and say you have to do marriage like WE do marriage

Some things we do well and some things we still stink at and are working on at year 16.

But again, for some you, you just need a picture of what a marriage could look like and it needs to be more concrete than the tent that I just outlined!

So I'm going to invite Kelly up here and have the two of us share a bit about our marriage to move from the abstract ideas about marriage to how we've TRIED at least to follow Christ

Kelly, tell a little bit about your own experience of how you were raised and coming to own your faith in high school

What are the ways that you've wrestled with or processed these submission passages?

Our initial issues in our marriage were a lot about trust—what do you think helped us work through those issues—besides lots of counseling!

[Kelly talks]

My take: a lot happened because you were willing to initiate conflict about things that needed to be addressed.

I'm conflict avoidant at home much more so than I am at work or in other relationships

so in a lot of ways even as we both felt the un-health of our marriage YOU were willing to fight for real intimacy and a real relationship

I would have been MUCH more likely to let things go and avoid the conflict and I might have let it go past the point of no return if you had waited on me to wake up and realize it was time to really address some of our problems

What are the things that you'd say characterize our strengths and weaknesses in our marriage right now?

[Kelly and then me]

As we're talking this morning about people on various parts of this spectrum, we've both known couples especially along the bottom axis of egalitarians and complimentarians

And we've both seen some really healthy marriages at both ends of the spectrum AND we've both seen some really un-healthy marriages at both ends of the spectrum

Could you speak to the women about perhaps some pitfalls to avoid and watch out for on either end?

[Kelly and then me]

I'll speak to the men: guys, our tendency is to swing one of two ways: toward being domineering and overly-aggressive
OR toward being really passive and disengaged

If you're going to embrace a complimentarian understanding of how to live this out, you've got to sit down with the gospels and really, really study how Jesus led

If the Scriptures are calling you to love and lead your wife like Christ loved his church

Then you've got to understand then that the Scriptures are calling you to die for your wife

That's hundreds of small deaths and maybe one big one if it comes down to it and she's NOT called to die for you!

She's supposed to submit to you, you're supposed to lay down your life for her that's a serious call

And if your job is to LEAD then one of the ways you've got to lead is in helping your wife find her voice and her gifts
especially if you're married to a wife who would rather hide behind you than discover who God has made her to be!

And if you're going to embrace an egalitarian position, don't do so out of laziness or passivity.

Men are very often tempted to dis-engage relationally and emotionally when it gets complicated and marriage is nothing if not complicated!

So men, don't baptize your fear and passivity behind an egalitarian stance.

You are called by Scripture to be a courageous, fully engaged, fully invested, fully involved husband

Who is not stuck in neutral all the time, perpetually coasting and just letting her take all the hits and make all the decisions for the family.

Kelly: Last word?

Invite us as a community to first find your place in the big-tent: what is the Lord calling you to live out of, what kind of action is that going to require from you?

AND to call us together as a community to live together in this big tent because what joins us together is not that we all agree on gender roles in marriage

What joins us together is Jesus Christ, and it's his sacrifice on our behalf that we celebrate this morning with communion.