Tim Lundy: One of the things we're trying to do here at BetterMan is, how do I get a clear definition of my life? What am I looking for? We've talked about that definition. You look in your notes there. The four life-giving responsibility of manhood. If you just go down the line with it, a real man courageously follows God's word. We've looked at that the last couple of weeks. What does it mean to have that true north, that I know what God's calling me to do? On each side, then, on one side, this will shape your life. He loves and protects God's woman. He loves and protects God's woman. Then the other side of it is, he excels at God's work. Those two things, keeping them in balance, knowing how to do those well, and we'll look at them over the next couple of weeks, this week and next week. And then finally, he betters God's world. He thinks about the legacy that he has behind him.

You can just see in your notes, this is what we are going to look at in our final sessions. How do we do each of these things well? Today we want to talk about how do you win with your wife? Not just live with your wife; win with your wife. Some of you that are married, man, this is directly applicable. Some of you who still want to get married, take good notes. Some of you who've been married and you may be sitting here today, "I've been married, I'm never getting married again." Don't count out the rest of your life. It's important in your life, and it's important for every guy to understand. There's principles in this that will apply to every guy, no matter your stage and where you are.

So, as you look at your notes there, look at that thing, the husband scale, understanding where you are on the husband scale, because few things are really going to shape your satisfaction in life. It's interesting. I've had a lot of friends in life, some of which have been phenomenally successful, and it's interesting; they're successful at work, they're successful financially, successful in so many different arenas, but if they're not successful in their marriage, it robs them of a satisfaction. In fact, I know some guys that they would go, "I would trade all of that if I could just make this relationship work," because it's so core and fundamental.

If you look at it, you're probably somewhere on this husband scale. And so, you look at the two ends of it. On one end you've got the lost husband. The lost husband. The other end, the life-giving husband. Those are your two extremes with it. And what do I mean with that? Well, look in your notes. The lost husband thinks he knows women and guesses about how to live with his wife. He's guessing. He thinks he knows. Great verse in Proverbs there, "There's a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." That verse probably applies in this relationship as much as anything. It's the guy that goes into the relationship and he's always thinking, "Oh yeah, I know what she's thinking. I know what she wants. I know what marriage is about."

I'll see it sometimes when I've counseled. Used to do a lot more premarital counseling, and you'd get a couple in there and they're so in love and they've got that look in their eye. Scientifically there's about an 18 month window when you first fall in love with someone that your brain is flooded with hormones and so the whole principle of love being blind, it actually is true, because literally, your brain is just so flooded with it, everything about them, you like. All those quirks and all those little things, and the great thing for a guy, everything about you, she likes. I think God actually designed it that way so that we could get women to marry us. They need that bombardment of chemicals during that time period so that they would fall in love with this. And you can think, "Oh, this is how it's always going to be." And if you stay in that phase of, "Oh man, I got her to fall in love with me. I got this thing figured out. I got this marriage thing figured out," you will always stay on that lost end of the spectrum and it will bite you.

I remember several years ago, I was in a men's group like this. We were around our table. We were talking, it was Valentine's Day and as we were sitting there, everybody's sharing, "What are you doing for your wife?" And this young guy who's a newlywed, he spoke up and he had a little bit of a know-it-all attitude anyway about all this. It's kind of like, "Oh, you guys are struggling with this. We don't struggle with this in our marriage." And we're like, "You haven't been married long enough to even know." So we asked, "What are you giving on Valentine's Day?" And he said, "You know, we talked about it. We're a very practical couple and so we're not giving anything." And I looked at him, I said, "Now, wait, when you said as a couple, we're not giving anything, did you think that applied to you? Because that doesn't mean you." And he goes ... I still remember he was so condescending. He's like, "Well, you just have to understand the way we just approach these kind of things." And I looked at him, I said, "Dude, hear me. Do something. Do something for her."

The next week we were around our table and I couldn't resist. I asked him, I said, "Hey, how'd Valentine's Day go for you?" And he spoke up and he goes, "Women are so strange." I said, "What happened?" He said, "We were sitting there eating dinner, perfectly good dinner. In the middle of it, she starts crying. She goes, locks herself in the bedroom. I finally get her to talk about it and said, 'What is going on?' And she said, 'You didn't get anything? You did nothing?'" He said, "But we said we weren't doing anything." She said, "I know you said that, but I thought you were going to surprise me." He's like, "Man, I don't know how this thing works." And we told him at the time, if you will stay in that posture that you don't know, man, you can actually start learning how this really works. And I would say that's true.

As you look in your notes there, look at the life-giving husband. The life-giving husband knows he doesn't know women, and that awareness motivates him to seek out wisdom and practical help to live well with his wife. He knows he doesn't know. And so he's constantly in a mode of going, "Okay, I've got to keep learning." And here's where I would encourage some of you because you may be here and you go, "Oh, we've been married for years. I remember when I didn't know then." Here's the thing about it. Women change throughout the whole course of the marriage. So just when you think you do know, she's going to change on you. And I don't mean that in a mean way. It's just as she grows in life, as she goes from being a newlywed. And if you have kids in the home, and then you go from having little kids in the home to having elementary kids in the home, and then you go from elementary kids, to you start launching kids and then you find yourself in an empty nest. Each of these stages and then even being a grandparent.

I know some guys that their wives totally changed on them when she became a grandmother, and they're trying to figure out this new season of life. And if you approach every season going, "Okay, I finally have it figured out," instead of approaching it going, "Okay, as we enter this new season, what do I need to learn? What do I need to know?" Look how Peter puts it. He says, "Husbands, live with your wives according to knowledge, since she is a woman." Live with your wives in an understanding way, in a way where you're learning all the time. And Peter was married, by the way. Scripture points this out. He's not just writing this as some principle for somebody else. He's a guy who's lived in it and he says you've got to live in this understanding way. We're just different.

Can I just say unequivocally that men and women are absolutely different? Culture is trying to erase the lines, and the problem with it is there's so many differences between them, it's hard to erase those lines. That's why this level of foolishness and craziness that has grabbed our culture today on this. Biologists have estimated there's close to 10 million differences between men and women. 100 million when you go through it, just physiologically. Men have greater stamina and brute strength. I mean, it becomes pretty obvious. Things that used to be just totally obvious, you have to say them today. Men have a strength that women don't have. We have 20% more red blood cells than they do, and because of that, we can carry more oxygen. Athletically, physically, you can see things that men can do. Interestingly though, women live longer.

Men and women process information, totally different. You can see it in the way that we speak. You can see it in our orientation toward life. Men are action-oriented more. Women are relational-oriented more. If you've ever had children play sports and you and your wife are watching them play the game, how do you each approach it? I mean, as dad, you're sitting there watching, "How are they doing? How are they playing?" Because we're action-oriented. I want to see, are they doing well? Are they playing well? How's your wife approach it? "How is he? Oh, how's she feeling? Oh, I bet that hurt." I mean, she's thinking about how they are and how they're feeling with it.

Over the years with all the kids and especially boys I have, we've done about every sport under the sun and it's always interesting. We've got three that play hockey right now. I love watching hockey. I enjoy watching them out there. My youngest in particular as we finished, especially after a game, whenever we get in the car after a game, kind of the ritual, he'll ask, "How'd I do?" We just narrow it down to two things. One: "Man, here's where you were just awesome. You nailed it. You're growing there." And then he always says, "Okay, what can I do better?" I was out of town last year. I remember I was out of town for a game and Lee took him to the game and so they get in the car afterwards and he immediately goes, "All right, Mom, how'd I do?" "Sweetheart, you were the best player out there." He's like, "What? No, no, no. How'd I do?" Finally he called. He's like, "Hey dad, can you tell mom how to do, how'd I do?" Because he's thinking about it different than she does.

We're just wired differently. We communicate differently. Our brains function differently. Now, this is fascinating part. You know the two hemispheres of the brain, they've documented women have more connections between the hemispheres than we do. That's why women can multitask. That's why women can take in information all the time. That's why you look at it, they've described it, women are like radar. They're taking it all in all the time. Men, on the other hand, have the ability to live in one hemisphere or the other and go deeper, do deep task more. That's why men are great. We're great at focusing. We're great at zeroing in. We are more comfortable doing that.

Men, whatever I'm doing, I want to focus on that instead of living between the two. You see this in particular ... I mean, if you want to see this the most graphically, think about the bedroom and think about sex. I mean, when you go into it as a man, women are the radar. We're lasers. We are focused. And so for us, I mean, if we're focused on sex in particular, we're really laser focused. How many times you enter into that and suddenly she's bringing up some topic. Like, man, you start making out and then she goes, "Oh, I didn't tell you; Tommy got a really bad score on his math grade." And you're sitting there going, "I don't care if the kid flunks out of school at this moment. I mean, let's get in the game here. Come on!" Now, as a result, and this ... I mean, this just free part of your notes with it as you think about that. You know, it's been said, "Sex for a man is the beginning of a new act." So for us, sex, it's like, "Ooh, start." It doesn't matter what happened up until that moment. Sex for a woman is a continuation of everything that happened up to that moment. Why? Because her brain's different, and shutting off all that stuff is harder for her.

We're wired differently and the sooner you realize those difference .. If you notice in your box, I liked the way Phil McGraw put it. He said, "There's a big difference between really living and just existing. Existing operates on guesswork and instinct. Really living, on the other hand, comes through the exercise of certain learned skills that you have acquired and honed." Have we learned the skills to be a great husband? Have we learned and honed the skills of, "Do I understand her in this season of life?" I may have done great up until this point. I may have been husband of the year up until this point. Do I understand this season, though? Or, and let me just say on the inverse of that, I may have done lousy up until now. You know what? I can get in the game and start learning now. Become the husband she always longed for.

Let's take a moment. I want you to look. Somewhere on this husband scale is you. Somewhere on this husband scale is you. Take a moment and mark where you are from the lost to the life-giving. Just take a hard look at you. How do we move to become more life-giving? How do we take the movement in that? Let me give you what your wife needs most. Here's what your wife needs most from you. First, she needs to feel your heart. She needs to feel your heart, and this is hard for us immediately as we go there because this doesn't come naturally to us as guys. It is hard for us as men to express our hearts. It's hard for us to even understand our hearts at times. We don't know what we're feeling, much less to be able to verbalize it or connect on it. And so just by design recognize we're not leading with strength here. This is an area that we go, okay, I'm going to have to work on this because what comes naturally to me is not what she needs. What naturally comes, I can connect with another guy. We don't have to have big heart to heart talk. Now, it's great when we reach that heart level, it really is. But I can connect with a guy if we go out and have fun and do something together.

And we can start thinking, "Okay, yeah, as long as there's nothing really too bad going on at home, as long as we keep it at a level we're not fighting or anything else, we can be okay with that." And she's sitting there going, "I'm dying. I don't know him." I've done enough counseling over the years with different couples and it's interesting. Every so often you'll see a guy gets really surprised because he thought they were doing great. And then when she in that setting just finally opens up and just says, "I don't feel like I know him. Don't feel like I know what's going on. Don't know how to connect." And he's sitting there just surprised. And part of it, it's just easy. We've been going, we've been doing, we've been thinking about it, how we would approach it as a guy, but she needs your heart.

So as you look at that, husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church. Remember that verse is all about sacrifice. So, I don't get the luxury of approaching her the way I like approaching her. I have to approach her the way she actually needs it. That's sacrifice. Makes me a little uncomfortable, costs something out of me. Doesn't come natural. I have to work at it. Priority number one for every husband is to make sure his wife feels loved, and you might want to underline that word feels. Notice the sentence doesn't say, "Make sure his wife is loved." Because it's so easy to go, "Oh, I love my wife." Absolutely I love her, but does she feel it? It's one thing to say, "I do." It's another thing to go, "She actually feels it in that." And if she doesn't feel it, you may have the deepest love in the world; she's still losing here on this one.

Social research has confirmed that emotional engagement is by far and away the single most important factor in a woman's happiness in marriage. Again, just let that sink in for a moment. Emotional engagement. Even as I read that there's a certain part of it, I go, it's the single most important factor for her to really feel that happiness in a marriage, and it's probably the single greatest factor we struggle with naturally doing so. So, this is literally a step it up area, guys, for all of us. I don't have the luxury of just doing it the way I like doing it, and I can't assume I'm doing it well. So, how do I help her feel this? Look at it. It says, "This is a call to emotionally connect with your wife." To emotionally connect, to actually share what I'm feeling. And that's hard in that moment.

I remember years ago I was in a message. It was a sermon and in part of it, I started sharing some stuff that was going on, things I'm struggling with in my life. I opened up, I was real vulnerable with people, and after the message I had different people come down and they're like, "Oh man, I appreciate you just opening up like that. I appreciate how real you were." You're kind of like, "Oh man, I'm so excited." Get the car and we're driving home and I said, "Hey, what'd you think of the message today?" Which is, you know, wasn't it great? And she doesn't look at me at all. She just looks out the window. She said, "It was fine." Now, fine is not a good word, ever. I said, "Are you okay?" She goes, "I'm fine." And especially when you hear fine, just like that, it's getting worse. Finally I go, "Did I do something?" She looked at me and she said, "It's just hard to hear you share what's going on inside in front of thousands of people when you haven't shared that with me personally." I was like, oh. You're feeling it in this moment too. It's like, ugh.

Now, unfortunately in that moment, I didn't have the hindsight and the wisdom that we have today, and so I got defensive. My first response was like, "Fine, fine. I open up my heart, open up my life, serve Jesus, and this is how I get treated." It was a lousy answer, just lousy on all fronts with it. I finally had to go back to her and just apologize. Just go, "You know what? You are absolutely right," and I just had to tell her, "I don't know. It's just that weird part of me. It's easier on a stage. It's easier with a bigger audience, because it's intimate and vulnerable here. You have to let down your guard." Part of sharing our feelings that we don't like, we don't like that feeling of, "Okay, I've got to let down my guard," or we've convinced ourselves as guys, "I'm the man. I've always have to have the right answers. I've always have to solve it. I've had to work through my feelings so I can lead in this situation. If I actually invited her in where I'm struggling, man, wouldn't that be worse?" It's that place of just inviting her in, in what really is going on. She longs for that.

If you don't watch it, you can start doing [inaudible 00:21:13], Sheldon Vanauken has his term. I love it. He calls it creeping separateness that comes into a marriage and a relationship. Listen to how he describes it. He says, "The killer of love is creeping separateness. Love is a gift of the gods, but then it is up to the lovers to cherish it or to ruin it. Taking love for granted, especially after marriage, ceasing to do things together, finding separate interest. We turning into I. Self, what I want to do, is actual selfness. This is the way of creeping separateness. In the modern world, everything favors it. The man going off to his office, the woman staying home with the children, her children, or perhaps having a different job. The failure of love might seem to be caused by hate, boredom, or unfaithfulness with a lover, but those are only the results. First came the creeping separateness, the failure behind the failure."

That's a powerful statement because it's one of those ones that for all of us, we have to look at and go, "Man, is that happening in my relationship?" Nothing overt, nothing drastic. It's just a creeping separateness apart. How do we tie that together? You do it emotionally, so here's three practical ways to stir up meaningful heart to heart connections. Three ways you can put it in action. First, regularly reassure your wife. Regularly reassure your wife. Remember, her brain operates different than yours. She needs assurances we don't need. It is interesting. I remember years ago when Shaunti Feldhahn did research with men and women and the difference in the relationship. One of the most striking things that stood out in the study is most men in a happy marriage, he wakes up every day thinking, "Well, of course she loves me. I mean, of course we're at a good place." Even in good marriages, she wakes up every day coming up with reasons he stopped loving me. Reasons that, does he really still want to be in this with me?

We don't think that way. They do. And so part of our role is, okay, how do I reassure her today? Look at the list there. These are great things. With words of affection. You can never say "I love you" enough. I'll just say that over and over again; with your wife and your kids, you can never say it enough. Suddenly you go, well, I grew up in a household we didn't say that that much. Yeah, that was wrong. Okay? You were damaged by that and so part of it is, don't do it. Say it over and over again. And you're here, "Well, I told her I loved her when I married her, and I'll tell her if anything changes." No. It changed for her every day. Every day it's changing in her head and so she needs to hear from you, "And I love you today."

With words of praise. "You're the best. You look beautiful. You're my best friend. You make life fun. You bring so much joy to my life." I mean, just specific phrases. Are you in a rut that you tell her the same thing over and over again? "Love you, honey. You're the best." That's a great phrase, unless it's the only phrase. When's the last time you said something original to her you thought about or you were looking at her life and you thought, "Okay, I want to tell her this." With warm hugs and tender touches that don't always lead to sex. That's a key point. I mean, when you give your wife a good hug, when you come by and, man, she's feeling ... when you give her a kiss, when y'all get in bed, does she know what's coming? She's like, "Oh, okay. I know. I know what's happening there." You need to practice juking a little bit.

I love basketball and especially you see a great ball handler like Steph Curry. I remember back in the day, especially Allen Iverson, you got a guy who could go down ... Every so often, my boys will pull up videos on their phone and go, "Watch this, dad." They always say the same phrase, "He broke his ankles." What they mean is you got a ball handler comes in and they juke, they make a move and the defender is so frozen or whatever, they fall over. They go, "Look how it broke his ankles." In the same way, you need to do that with your wife. And here's what I mean. You go in and you give her a great big hug. You're in bed together, you give her a big kiss at the end of the night. Instead of where she thinks it's going, because this is where it usually goes, you then look at her and go, "Good night, honey," and roll over. In that moment it breaks her ankles in a good way because it's telling her, "Oh wait, he doesn't just want sex. He loves me." When's the last time you showed that to her in that way? And here's the counterintuitive part; as you do that, it actually leads to more sex as she's feeling that physical affirmation with it.

With statements of commitment; "I'll always be here for you. I'm yours forever." You don't need those statements as much as she does because we just assume it. She doesn't, and so she needs to hear it. Look at the second thing. Pursue your wife. Pursue your wife. Leave a note on the bathroom mirror asking her out for dinner date. Delight her with a gift not connected to a special occasion. See, that's a juke. She's used to a gift. Oh, it's anniversary. Oh, it's this. What about a little gift, just because? Flowers that surprise out of the blue. Call her in the middle of the day. "I've been thinking about you." Ask her, "How can I love you better?" And then act on it. Actually do what she says. Write her a personal letter why you love her, especially on her birthday or anniversary. Guys, don't just buy the card and you look at it, you go, "That hallmark guy, he said it perfectly." And notice I underlined parts. I really meant that. No; you need to write. Write her personal note in it. Surprise her with an overnight or a weekend away. If you look at this as you go down the line, even if you did something as strategic as just going, "I'm going to make this my checklist," and you started going down the line, check, check, check, and did what was just written there, you'd be amazed at her response [inaudible 00:28:03].

Look at it. Speak your wife's love language. If you don't know, if you've never read Gary Chapman's book, the five love languages, or if you read it a long time ago, pull it out again. If you look at it, basically Chapman breaks it down. Each of us have five different ... one of the five love languages, one or two. And so you look at it, one. For some people, the way they hear love, the way they feel love is affirming words, the words that are said. If that's your wife, going, "I need to be strategic about ..." It's not just, oh, I tossed something out. It's words from the heart. I'm noticing. I'm speaking into her life. For some, it's physical touch. It's physical touch. That hug, that hand hold, that being there with her, she feels that and it goes deep for her in it. And not all touches are the same, so knowing how am I consistently ... Even just putting a hand on her shoulder, consistently when we're sitting together, reaching over. If touch is her love language, just even in that moment of reaching over and putting a hand next to her, grabbing her hand in that moment, it just screams to her, "Oh, he loves me."

The third category, quality time together; that you've carved out time. And when it's quality time, your phone's put away. You're not checking email. You're not doing different tasks. It was actually about her. She's getting that time. It's not about the kids either. It's literally about the two of you and having that time together. Gifts. For some, a gift, and it doesn't have to be a super expensive gift. She may be a very practical person, but still, gifts is her love language. And so it's more than the gift, it's the thought behind the gift; that you were thinking about her, that you put some effort into it and you gave her a gift. And then acts of service. For some it's like if you wash the dishes, she feels so loved. If you did something that just is part of her world, if you did something that helped in a tangible way.

Now it's not just her. We all have the same love languages as well, and here's a great way to test what yours is. We usually like to do for our spouse or our partner the one that we like to receive. And so, you have a guy that maybe acts of service is his love language. And so, man, when he wants to show her he loves her, he's doing stuff all around the house. He cleaned up more, he vacuumed even. He just did some ... And he's screaming at her, "I love you, I love you, I love you." Now, here's the problem. If that's not her love language, she's not hearing it that way. She's kinda, "Oh, that was sweet. Thanks for doing that." And then he's over there kind of offended. I just screamed I loved you and you didn't care.

And so part of it is really learning, okay, what is it that's hers? Not the one I like to give, but the one that's actually hers. Because I may be saying, "I love you, I love you, I love you," but I'm only saying it the way I like to hear it. If I don't say it in the way she likes to hear it and feel it, there's a miss there, even in couples who do love each other. So take a moment. I'll let you look through that list. Do you know your wife's love language? All right. As you look at that, let me ask you this. When's the last time you expressed it in her love language? If something doesn't come pretty readily to you, today, what would it look like if today you went, "Okay, how do I express it today? How do I do this today?" There's nothing greater to a wife than to feel her husband's heart for her in tangible ways. Such moments are life-giving. They're just absolutely life-giving.

Here's the second category with it. She needs to see your faith. She needs to see your faith. Husbands, keep your wives holy and blameless through the washing of water with the word. Again, that's out of that Ephesians 5 passage and Paul's telling us how to love our wives. Remember, we're supposed to love our wives like Christ loved the church. What'd he do? He sacrificed for the church. There's a specific ... He says "Your call is to keep her holy." Your call. Her spiritual growth, you actually have responsibility in. Have you ever thought about it in that way? Because a lot of times as guys you look at it and you go, "Well, man, she's growing more than I am. She's out there pursuing it more than I am." You know, that's probably not a good thing because I have a certain responsibility. How am I protecting her? How am I leading her? How am I speaking into this?

What does this mean? This is a call to spiritually initiate with your wife. Spiritually initiate. Not just spiritually engage, not just hang around and not drag the thing down. You are actually initiating in that and you can see in your notes that are written out there, these are good notes to go back through with it. This is the spot where Adam failed. Rather than confront evil and protect his wife with God's word, and we looked at that, he chose instead to become spiritually passive. You might underline that word passive. It's a key thing we struggle with as guys, if we're just honest. Adam said nothing. His faith became spiritually invisible. You see it in Genesis 3: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate and she gave to her husband with her, and he ate." In the one moment when he should have stepped up the most, he went silent. He was there. He was passive.

Adam should have stepped up and shown his faith in this critical moment. By not doing so, he brought hurt on himself, not only on himself but on his wife too, and as sons of Adam, all of us are like him, guys. We are prone to the same spiritual passivity today. And when we go there with our wives, somebody eventually gets hurt. The life-giving husband, and you might underline this word as well, rejects spiritual passivity. To confront passivity, it takes a conscious action of rejection. Let me say that again. To confront it, you have to consciously act. We're action prone and so we go, "I'm not going to live that way. I'm not going to stay passive, especially in this arena."

So, look at the three practical ways to show your faith to your wife, and then just get practical with it. One, initiate times of spiritual togetherness with her. Initiate time. You initiate. Don't wait for her. She shouldn't always be the one that has to bring up your spiritual life. She shouldn't always be the one that has to lead in what you're doing in it. You initiate. Look at the list there. It's not rocket science. One, pray with her. Just pray with her. And I'll go on record, I think this is the area as men, we are most passive. I think we struggle more with initiating prayer with our wives than anything else. And I don't say that as a, "Oh man, I'm trying to condemn you." I say that as a recognition. Man, we struggle with this. We just do. A lot of you, you're like, "Tim, she's better at that stuff than I am. I don't pray with her because I'm not good at praying, especially out loud with it. I don't know what to say or it gets awkward in the moment."

It's as simple as this; if you would just do this and hear me on this, it sounds too simple to be true. I promise you, if you would make a list of the people in your life that both of you love; your kids, your friends, your grandchildren, whoever it is, and if you did nothing more than on a regular basis said, "Hey, can we pray?" And you went down the line and said one thing that you'd love to see God do in their lives, I promise you in that moment, her heart, here's what she feels: "Oh man, he's praying about the people I love. He's praying about the things that matter to us." In that moment, her heart comes alive of, "Ah, just to hear him say that." It doesn't have to be these glowing theological prayers. Just sharing about the things that are on both of your hearts together.

Engage her in spiritual conversations. Again you're like, I don't know ... Here's what you say. "Hey, what's God doing in your life? Can I tell you what I feel like he's doing in my life, what I'm struggling with or questions I have around it?" Share with her your spiritual experiences. Again, it's just honest about where you are. Encourage involvement together at church. There's a reality for a lot of women in this category. They're tired of carrying the spiritual weight at home. They're tired of if we're going to be involved, if we're going to be active, if we're going to serve somewhere, if we're going to do something, she knows it's up to her. She's got to carry the weight of it. And when you just step forward and you initiate, when you're the one that speaks into it, when you're the one that says, "Hey, yeah, this is what we're going to do," you'd be amazed. It just feels like she feels like that weight is off and now she can follow, and she will affirm in that. She just will.

Anytime I teach through this stuff and guys start just doing the simple things we're talking about here. Literally, if you took that checklist of ways to love her, if you took these things that we're talking about, you actually made it a checklist that you were doing, anytime I teach and guys do this, I always have women later that come up and thank me. Like, "Man, I don't know what you're teaching." And I always go, "It's not me. It's just your husband put it in gear." On stuff that's not that hard, but if naturally we're left to ourselves, we go passive on it. Wives who attend church with their husbands on a weekly basis are happier in their marriages than other women. That's scientific. It's proven, sociologists over and over again.

Second way you do this, uphold the biblical values in the practical areas. And you look at them there, just keeping your word, resolving conflict, time with family, giving, avoiding debt, forgiveness, being truthful; all those things. Just knowing what your values are and you being the standard bearer. You being the guy that says, "I'm going to uphold that." You talk through these values with your wife. You protect the convictions in your home. You refuse to let them go even when it gets hard. Even in those hard moments, you're the one that says, "No, this is our standard in our house. This is what we do in the house." And with kids and with teenagers.

You know, I got a house full of boys right now and I have to speak into that of going, "No, no, no, we don't talk that way. No, no, no, we're not going to do that." When you're the one that just goes, "Here's where we live. This is how we're going to treat each other. This is how we're going to speak. This is how you're going to talk to your mom." All those things. If you're the voice that will say that, it just frees her so she's sitting there going, "Oh, I don't have to carry the weight of that. It just feel so good that he put his shoulder into that." That's what it means. Just be the standard bearer. Just go, "This is how we do things in our family," and you're the one that lifts that up.

Then the third category, you need to build some friendships with other godly men. We've talked about that here. If you don't have other men, iron sharpening iron in your life, we all drift back into the passivity. And so having those guys, opening your life to them and their input, their counsel, their company, your wife will be so encouraged if you do. She wants that. She wants you to have other guys in your life that are pulling you to the right things, that are pushing you on in that. Third category, and this is a hard one, but we need to dive right in it. She needs the freedom to choose. She needs the freedom to choose. That Ephesians 5 verse, "Husbands, provide and care for your wives." Provide and care for your wives. This is a call to financially liberate your wife. To financially liberate. Look at your notes there. The 21st century has been an amazing time for women. Everywhere, women are experiencing new opportunities, new freedoms, new breakthroughs. The number of wives working outside the home has increased dramatically. Women are doing amazing things.

And I'll just stop in that. I don't want to go backwards. We can glorify the past and we can go, "Oh man, it was so better in the past in all these different ways." I've got daughters. I see my adult daughters thriving in different ways. I see the opportunities that are afforded in the world. And so, we live in the 21st century today. We need to embrace the good of the opportunities that have been provided in that. But notice that last line. The irony is, with these advances, there's become a marked decrease in happiness women feel in their lives. And so while we don't want to lose the good of the advances, shouldn't we stop at some point and go, "With all the advances, shouldn't they be happier?" And yet if you track every study of where women are in the happiness scale, they're going down. It's counterintuitive.

Look in that box. According to the General Social Survey, every year since 1972, women's reported happiness has declined. Much of it has to do with a woman's struggle in balancing work with children and home. If you really dig into this, with all the advances, they haven't changed on an internal level because relationally, they feel that struggle of, "Okay, I've got work and I've got these opportunities here, but how do I do that while I still care about home and I still care about my kids?" That pull decreases level of satisfaction and happiness.

This is where we come in. Husbands are the difference makers when it comes to a wife's life balance. Husbands are the difference makers. The husband who can financially support his wife, at least at a basic living level, provides his wife with expanded life options. With his emotional support and financial backing, she will now feel she no longer has to work full-time. She's free to choose how much she will work outside the home, which is essentially important to her as a mother when children are home, especially the youngest years, especially with newborns and little kids in that. Now, as I say that, some of you are sitting there feeling, you're like, "Tim, we live in the Bay area." And I feel it here. There's certain parts of the country where the dynamics of that change, and trust me, I know that. I know living here and know the pressure, and some of you are sitting there going, "Man, with both of us working full-time, we're barely making it."

Here's what I would encourage you. There's not a prescription of scripture and there's nothing in this, and I don't want you taking out of this that this is saying, "Oh, women can't work." Yes, women can work, but here's the key. How are you partnering with her in these conversations? It's interesting generationally. My generation and those above it, we brought in a mentality of, "Yeah, I'm working hard to try to free her as much as I can." Younger generation come in with the mentality, they don't even have these conversations. They don't even talk about this. It's just assumed, "We're both going to work, and both going to work full time." Too often, she's the one paying the price for that.

Part of it is just, have the honesty enough to go, "How are we formulating our lives? How are we setting up our home? How are we approaching this together? If we both have to work, which we might, how am I compensating with what's needed here? I may have to step up at home in ways that they didn't in past generations because we both are sharing that together." Having the conversation and leading out in it, you'd be amazed at the impact it has that she suddenly feels like, "I'm not just in alone, feeling home, feeling work, feeling all these pulls. He's with it in me. He's trying to forge a path for us together."

According to Pew Research, in 2012, 67% of mothers said their ideal was either part-time work or no work outside the home. It's not like all of them ... You can go, "Well, they all want to work." They don't all. Especially as a mom, she feels that pull all the time. And so part of it is a husband, how do I engage her in that? I like the way the notes put it there. The moral husband financially provides for his wife beyond the basics, the more choices she will have in how and where she wants to invest her life. Guys, this is hard. It just is. It's hard to engage it. We went through it in our marriage in different seasons. We'd been married about eight years. Lee had worked, I'd worked. I was in seminary as a four-year graduate program and it was expensive and I had one job already. I was going to school and I had one job. She taught school. Our benefits came through her, and then she got pregnant.

And we'd always had this ideal. Man, when we have a baby, we want you to stay home. Until we actually got pregnant. And then I'm looking at the bills and I'm looking at how we're going to do it. I didn't know, how are we going to do this? We talked about it, we prayed about it, and then she came and she said, "You know, I really want to be home with our baby." And it was the rubber meets the road time of, did I really believe this or not? So, I took another job and then was working two jobs and going to school full-time, and about killed me. And hear me, because some people tell these stories, "We made this choice and then God blessed us with this amazing check that came in the mail." The check never came in the mail. The money never showed up. It didn't. It was hard, hard season of life and it hasn't been the only season.

There's been different points in our marriage. Just few years ago, we wanted to get our kids in this private school. We really felt like educationally, they needed it. Lee taught at the school. It was a choice that we made together. But here's the key. It's coming to it together and going, okay, have we talked about it? Have we thought about it? Does she know that I care in that? Wives today long for their husbands who financially free them up, and that may mean as you sit down together and you go, "Where we are right now, man, we're working, but how are we sharing this together? Did we even have the conversation?" A friend of mine, Kevin, he's an attorney, successful attorney, but he had scaled back in his practice. His wife was an emergency room doctor and she's great in that, and we were going through this material together. They had few kids in the home and he had scaled his practice in ways that he was at home more with that. But he went to her and he said, "Hey, we're talking to this stuff. Would you want to stay home? Would you want to stop working?" And he was sure he knew her answer because I mean, she's this great doctor. And it shocked him when she looked at him and she said, "Let me think about it."

For a couple of days he kind of panicked. It was like, "What did I just unleash here?" And she came back to him and she said, "You know, I want to work. I love being a doctor. I was made to be a doctor." And hear me. Your wife, she may love to work. That's how God made her, and she thrives there. But she said these words to him. She said, "You will never know what it means to me that you at least asked the question, that we could at least talk about it." Do you have the courage to talk about this with your wife? There may be no immediate solution. No check comes in the mail, nothing drops from heaven. It may be a hard season that you're both working together. But here's the key; that you're engaging, that you're leading in it, that you have a goal that you would go, "Man, if you want to be home, how could we structure our life around that? Or how can we cut back, or how do I take responsibility?" Just stepping into it, you'd be surprised what it means to her heart that she doesn't feel like she's pulled in this alone. But that takes courage.

Look in your notes there, guys. The life-giving husband. In summary, it's as an emotional connector, his wife feels loved. She feels it. As a spiritual initiator, his wife feels protected. Man, he is looking out for our home. As a financial liberator, his wife feels free. Man, he is carrying this. He's stepping into this. He's talking about it. We're carving this out together. Allie Stuckey puts it this way. "Here's the secret every woman knows; women want real men. Men they can count on and look up to. I don't know any woman at any age who's attracted to a passive man who looks to her to be his protector, his provider, his leader. Every woman wants a strong, responsible man." That's at the core of this is what it's talking about. How do I step into the responsibilities God's given me? How do I step in and step up as a man?

I don't care who you are; there's something in this session. There's probably parts in this session as I went through it, you're like, "I'm doing pretty good there. You know what? I could maybe improve my game, but I'm pretty good there." I don't care who you are; there's parts of this session, if you're real honest with yourself, you're going, "I'm probably not doing as good there as I really should be." In that feeling, in that moment, here's the choice you have. Do I passively just pull back and go, "Oh, that makes me uncomfortable. I'm not going to think about it"? Or do I decide with courage to go, "Okay, I'm going to be the man God's called me to be in this arena because I have my true north. God's word is my true north and this is what he's calling me to live out in his work"? Culture may change. This hasn't changed.

Here's what you can bank on; when you live what God's calling you to do, he's the one that actually designed men and women. So if he tells you this is how you're supposed to love her, this is how you're supposed to step in her life, I promise you this; within a matter of months or years, culture will be telling you something totally different that you need to be doing, and they keep changing. God is consistent, because he was actually the designer. So even though this is hard, even though this calls us to step out in a way, I promise you, if you'll trust what he's saying and you apply it in this arena of life, you will experience what God means in that relationship and what he designed it to be. I challenge you. Let's don't go passive. Let's reject it today. Today, when you leave here today, something out of these notes, apply it today, and she will feel and know the impact because of your leadership.