

September 12th-13th
DEATH BY MARRIAGE

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”

EPHESIANS 5:25-27

Robertson McQuilkin. Ever heard of him? He was third president of Columbia International University from 1968-1990. He resigned his position to care for his wife who had Alzheimer's Disease. Kent Hughes uses his resignation chapel speech to highlight the holy sweat of loving our wives sacrificially. Here's some of the words that appear in "Disciplines of a Godly Man": "The decision was made, in a way, 42 years ago when I promised to care for Muriel 'in sickness and in health ... till death do us part.' So, as I told the students and faculty, as a man of my word, integrity has something to do with it. But so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years; if I cared for her for the next 40 years, I would not be out of debt. Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more; I love Muriel. She is a delight to me - her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of that wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I do not have to care for her, I get to!" His words are so powerful since they give us a picture of what sacrificial love is, the same sacrificial love that Christ shows us. What does God teach us here?

Hughes speaks of three actions that come from sacrificial love: death, suffering, and intercession. Here in this devotion, we will discuss death and intercession. Christ calls us to love our wives with the same sacrificial love that Christ shows for us. This means death: death to our dreams, our desires, our comforts, our hobbies. But there's more to it than just a morbid view of marriage. Death to our own wants and needs gives us the strength to love our wives with complete commitment. It brings us to a point that we admit that it's not about us. It never was. Marriage is the gift that God gives us to sharpen us to make us more like Christ. It's only upon death that we truly are able to see the deepest needs that our spouse has. Otherwise, we get blinded by our own wants and desires, which cloud our judgment. Men, have you died to yourself so you can love your wife fully? What does this look like you might ask? One easy indicator is listening. When our wives are sharing with us what their concerns, worries, and hopes are, are we truly listening? Do we consider these moments interruptions? Do we just want to do something else instead of listen? Do you sometimes bring your wife into the same voice as the Peanuts teacher with Charlie Brown? Listening well equals loving well.

Interceding for your wife is also a key part of loving her sacrificially. How often do you pray for your wife? When is the last time that you asked your wife if you could pray for her, and prayed for her in that exact moment? This may be intimidating to you. Be encouraged men. Sometimes we may struggle to know exactly what to pray for our wives. But God. According to Romans 8:26: "...For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." The Holy Spirit takes our incomplete prayers and prays them exactly according to the perfect will of God. God will give you exactly what you need to follow Him in obedience. Part of that obedience is to pray for your wife. Pray that she would treasure Jesus. Pray that she would have opportunities to share Christ with others. Pray that God would protect her mind and heart from the enemy. Pray that she would sense His presence.

These are simple actions to obey our King. No one said that obedience was hard because we don't understand what God calls us to. It's hard because it chafes against our innate selfishness to look

out for number one. Men, love like Christ loves you. Ask Him for more grace to see how much He loves you, so that you can love your wife sacrificially.

Spend some time thinking how Christ sacrificed his life for you. Ask Him for more grace so that you can love your wife in the same way...every day.

For Further Reading: Ephesians 5:22-33