

**05/12/24 “A Husband’s Love for His Wife – Part 1”
Ephesians 5:25-27**

Welcome...

We are studying the book of Ephesians. Our text this morning is Ephesians 5:25-27.

Let’s read Ephesians 5:25-33...

We saw these last two weeks in Ephesians 5 that the Christian wife is called to honor and submit to her husband. At first glance, it could appear that husbands have the easier role. Yet when Paul describes the quality of love for which the husband must strive, we realize what a heavy burden of responsibility is placed on him in his leadership role. “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.”

There is no honest Christian husband who can hear or read these words without being convicted. But thankfully God has given us the Holy Spirit to empower us to obey God’s commands for His glory, for the benefit of our marriages, as an example to our children, and as a powerful testimony of the grace of God to our surrounding community.

Main point: Ephesians 5:25-27 describes three aspects of a husband’s love for his wife.

The Command in verse 25a

The Criterion in verse 25b

The Care in verses 26-27

My prayer is that we will understand just how wide, and long, and high, and deep is the love of Christ and we will be empowered and filled by the Spirit to love in a Christlike way, especially husbands who are to love your wife as Christ loved and gave Himself for the church.

I. The Command

Verse 25a...

Paul uses the present imperative which commands husbands to continually love their wives.

Now, this command may be surprising because men get married because they love the women that they're marrying. They're in love with them. He's in love with her, so why in the world would the husband need to be commanded to love his wife? Isn't this the very reason they are getting married?

The command may seem strange for those just falling in love, those who have recently been engaged, or are dating. You may ask, “A man loves a woman and that is why they are getting married. Why does a husband have to be commanded to love his wife? If you have to be commanded, now something's wrong.” Friends, something is wrong! Do you know what it is? It is sin.

Alexander Pope said, “A couple dreams in courtship, but in marriage they awake.” The honeymoon is barely over, and the husband recognizes his wife is a sinner and the wife is surprised that her husband is even a bigger sinner!

The person you loved to visit with, you are now living and working with. The person who was once your escape from responsibility has become your most significant responsibility. Reasons for attraction now become sources of irritation.

The world's love is always object-oriented. A person is loved because of physical attractiveness, personality, wit, prestige, or some other such positive characteristic. In other words, the world loves those whom it deems worthy of love.

But as soon as a person loses a positive characteristic—or that characteristic is no longer appealing—the love based on the characteristic also disappears. It is because so many husbands and wives have only that kind of fickle love for each that their marriages fall apart. As soon as a partner loses his or her appeal, love is gone, because the basis for the love is gone.

Ernie Baker gives some examples of how this plays out in his book, *Marry Wisely, Marry Well*. He writes:

He married her because she was so gentle and quiet. He divorces her because she is so weak and helpless.

He married her because she was so attractive all the time. He divorces her because she spends too much time in front of the mirror.

He married her because she was so neat and organized. He divorces her because she is too compulsive and controlling.

So, the idea of being commanded to love in Ephesians 5 should not surprise us. Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-40, “And He said to him, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Notice, we have to be commanded to love God. How much more then, commanded to love our wives? So, this shouldn't surprise us that there is this command to love.

In the second commandment, “love your neighbor as you love yourself,” your wife is your nearest and best neighbor. She is the one who you are commanded, horizontally, to love the best.

Men, how can we do this? Remember in Ephesians 4:1, we are commanded to “live a life worthy of the calling we have received.” And we are only able to do this, Ephesians 5:18, by the power of the Spirit, as we are filled with the Spirit.

We saw last week that the command to the wife to submit to her husband was directly, even grammatically connected to being filled with the Spirit... “Wives to your husbands.”

So, it just flows right from the Spirit-filled life. But we should see the extension also to the husband. For the husband to exhibit this supernatural love like Jesus, he has to have a supernatural source, the continual filling of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit he is enabled to love his wife in this way. In what way?

Notice verse 25...

II. The Criterion

Paul refers to *agapē* love—the kind of love that seeks the highest good of the other, even at the price of one’s own comfort, safety, and benefit.

Paul’s exhortation to husbands “to love” is illustrated by “love” in the person of Christ. Notice that the analogy between husbands and Christ is not concerned with headship but love. Verse 25 does not say “husbands, be heads over your wives”—that is already an established fact, but the present imperative command is “love your wives.”

Agape love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved. “Love seeks the highest good of the one loved,” just as Christ died for us so that He might sanctify and cleanse us, to present us to Himself in all our glory, as holy and blameless (5:26-27).

There was nothing about you or me that deserved or required Christ’s love. Quite the contrary, Romans 5:8 says, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Not only did we not love him, but we were heading the opposite direction in our sin. This is why our relationship with him is solely by His mercy and grace.

A husband’s love for his wife must be unconditional as well. We have to admit at the outset that the analogy breaks down a bit because we are sinful human beings. We also recognize that there were “conditions” that attracted us to our wives, including personality, interests, and good looks!

But this agape love in marriage is heart attraction resulting in cheerful, sacrificial action.

Verse 25, “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” He is our standard. Jesus didn’t sit on His throne in heaven and bark commands to us on earth. At a personal cost that we can never fully fathom, He humbled Himself and laid aside His rights as God, took on human flesh and became obedient to death on the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

“Amazing love, how can it be, that Thou my God shouldst die for me!” Or as we sang, Magnificent, Marvelous, Matchless love; too vast and astounding to tell.

Ephesians 5:25...

When a husband treats his wife poorly and puts her down, he is proclaiming heresy, that Christ abuses and puts down His bride.

If the husband is a dictator over his wife, he tells the world that the gentle, loving Christ is a cruel tyrant.

When a man abdicates his headship and lets his wife lead in the marriage and lead the family, the husband teaches that Christ does not lovingly shepherd His church and that the church is free to live out from under submission to Christ, again heretical lies.

If a husband deserts his wife, either through unfaithfulness or indifference or by being married to his career or to his hobbies, he preaches that Christ abandons His church—another falsehood.

Jesus said in John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” The point of Christ’s incarnation was to serve us in His death that we might be released from the bondage of our sin. As the Good Shepherd came to lay down his life for the sheep, He is our model for serving our wives!

The criterion, the pattern for the husband's love is Christ's sacrifice at the cross for the Church. Jesus spoke quite directly about love and sacrifice in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Christ delighted to lay down His life for His bride. The cost was immeasurable, but the ultimate glory of what Jesus has done is also infinite and immeasurable.

In the Old Testament, there was frequently a bride price. Do you remember how Jacob worked for his father in Laban in order to marry his daughter? Genesis 29:20 tells us, "Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her."

In 1 Samuel 18, David wanted to marry the daughter of King Saul. The bride price was 100 dead Philistine men. "I think Saul was hoping to get rid of David, but he underestimated him. David went out and killed 200. And in that way, he was enabled to win Saul's daughter, Michal.

But Jesus had to conquer the devil and death at the cross. That was the bride price, and Jesus paid it. Jesus said in Mark 10:45, "for the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many."

Hebrews 12:2 says, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

What was the joy that enabled Jesus to endure the cross? He could see the future, how as Revelation 14 describes there would be some from "every tribe and language and people and nation," clothed in white, standing around the throne, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb."

The night before His crucifixion Jesus prayed in John 17, "Father, I want those whom you have given Me, the elect, to be with Me and to see My glory. I want to share this blessedness together, and I am delighted to give My life to make that happen."

It's a shared joy, eternal marriage in Heaven between Christ and the Church, a shared experience of delight in each other. And for this, Jesus laid down His life.

Husbands are to do that for their wives. Men, we need to be honest and realize that this is the hardest thing we will ever do. Jesus said in Luke 9:23... He said in John 12:24...

To die to self and live for Christ and lovingly, sacrificially, and intentionally love and lead your wife. Men, you need to ask, "Am I doing this for my wife? Am I laying down my life for my wife?"

The husband who submits to the Lord by being filled with His Spirit is able to love his wife with the same kind of love Jesus has for His own bride, the church. The criterion of the Lord's pattern of love for His church is the husband's pattern of love for his wife. But not only is there the command to love, and the criterion of that love, but third, there is the care that goes with that love.

III. The Care

Verses 26-27...

The husband's love for his wife is a sanctifying love. The love of Jesus in giving Himself was not merely that we might be forgiven but that we would be holy. This should be the primary care on the husband's heart and mind.

To sanctify means to set apart unto God for His purposes. Just as couples often pledge at their wedding, “forsaking all others, I devote myself to you alone,” so when Christ saves us, we are set apart from the world unto Him alone.

In Ephesians 5:26 God calls on the husband to follow Christ’s example and lead his wife in spiritual growth.

Kent Hughes presses home this truth. He writes, “The man who sanctifies his wife understands that this is his divinely ordained responsibility. Is my wife more like Christ because she is married to me? Or is she like Christ in spite of me? Has she shrunk from His likeness because of me? Do I sanctify her and help her progressively know and trust Christ more and more, or do I hold her back? Is she a better woman because she is married to me?”

Just as Christ’s relationship with His church promotes spiritual growth, so husbands are expected to nurture positive growth in their wives.

The husband is not to “use” his wife for his own pleasure, but rather is to show the kind of love that is mutually rewarding and sanctifying. The marriage experience is one of constant growth when Christ is the Lord of the home.

Verse 26...

Today, Christ continues to sanctify His church through the ministry of His Word. Jesus prayed in John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

When you were saved, you were set apart for God. As you grow in your faith, you are more and more experiencing sanctification. You love sin less and you love God more. You want to serve Him and be a blessing to others. All of this comes through the Word.

John 17:17 says God’s Word is truth. In John 14:6 Jesus said He is the truth, and 1 John 5:6 says the Holy Spirit is the truth (1 John 5:6). We need all three if we are to experience true sanctification, a sanctification that touches every part of our inner person. With the mind, we learn God’s truth through the Word. With the heart, we love God’s truth, His Son. With the will, we pray and yield to the Spirit and live God’s truth day by day.

You married your wife because you found something attractive in your wife that led you to commit to her. But spiritually speaking, Jesus found his bride the exact opposite of all those things. Ephesians 2:1-3 says He found us dead in our transgressions and sins.

But Revelation 19:7 says, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to the Lord, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”

In Ephesians 5 Paul tells us the bride is the church; and Jesus Christ, the Lamb, is the Bridegroom. At a wedding, it is customary to focus attention on the bride; but in Revelation 19 it is the Bridegroom who receives the honor! “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him.”

Why? Because He has saved His bride, the church, His body of believers. He has transformed us and is going to make his bride beautiful and radiantly holy, so He can enjoy her forever.

Ephesians 5:25-27...

Jesus washed His bride with water through the word, the word of the Gospel cleansed her conscience and her heart by faith. And positionally, she seemed to be in justification, holy and blameless in his sight, but then in actuality, she's not.

She has bad habits, she has a sin nature, all that kind of thing. And there is progressive salvation, the sanctification that goes on. That's the marvel of all of this.

And one of the beauties of marriage is that God has given us marriage as a workshop of salvation, of sanctification, because neither the husband nor the wife are done being saved. We both need to be made progressively holy, and yet we have these roles to play.

Ephesians 5 says a Christian husband is to have this same care for his wife. While you, husband, are helping your wife grow, you will be growing spiritually too.

You are not Jesus Christ to your wife, you are not sinless and you have not shed your blood for her. You're not the atoning sacrifice turning away the wrath of God. That's been done once for all.

But now you are called to act like Jesus in your wife's life, and that is to partner with Christ through the Spirit in her ongoing salvation, and sanctification, to help her grow in grace in the knowledge of Christ. And you get to do that by washing her with water through the word of God.

Look at 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 with me, "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."

Paul says to the church, "I'm jealous for you, with a godly jealousy." He said, "I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so I might present you as a pure virgin to him."

The Christian husband ought to think of his wife that way. In essence, I'm not your real husband, Jesus is. And I want to get you ready for the real wedding day, the eternal one. I want to do everything I can to get you ready for Jesus. That's what this marriage is about. Both husband and wife getting ready to meet the Lord.

And as the husband leads in this way, his marriage will only get better and better. And we will see next week, just how foolish it is not to do this, because verse 28 says, "He who loves his own wife loves himself."

Husbands, are you doing this? Have you set aside time for the two of you to be in the word and prayer together? Does your wife know that Christ is the first love of your life but she knows that next to Christ she immediately comes next?

Men, do not forget those 8 letters that comprise 3 words and have one powerful message: I love you. You can never write or say those words too often to your wife.

Christian wives hope that their husbands will be godly leaders. They hope that you will take the initiative in communicating love in word and action. What does this look like?

It includes praying for your wife and praying with your wife. Praying brings your two hearts together to want to do God's will in every aspect of your lives. It is one of the most vital things that you can do together.

Praying together requires communication at a deep level as you share concerns for one another, your family, and other matters. Most significantly, prayer connects you with the presence and power of the One whose loving purpose you are seeking to fulfill as a couple.

You may be saying, “Well, you don’t know my wife!”

You’re right, I don’t know your wife like you do. But I know what God commands of you regardless of your wife. When a man understands and embraces a primary God-given responsibility for the spiritual life of the family, praying for your wife and praying with your wife, taking your family to church, calling for prayer at meals — when the husband senses a primary God-given responsibility for the discipline and education of the children, the stewardship of money, the provision of food, the safety of the home, the godly resolution of conflict -asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness, that special sense of responsibility is not authoritarian or autocratic or domineering or bossy or oppressive or abusive. It is simply servant-leadership.

And if the husband truly worships Christ and serves His wife in a Christlike way, then I truly believe that your wife will not regret being married to a man like that.

Husband, love your wife as Christ loves the church. Do it sacrificially and intentionally, through your words and actions, for God’s glory, for the benefit of your marriage, for your own spiritual growth, as an example to your children, and as a powerful testimony of the grace of God to our surrounding community.

Let’s pray...