

## At Home in Christ's Love

Ephesians 5-6

Have you ever taken the truth home? The Scriptures are full of glorious promises: teachings that promise to transform. But have they transformed your heart? Have they changed your home life? It is frustrating to hear these tantalizing truths week after week if you can't seem to take them home. But you can. Here's hope. The love of Christ can transform your heart; it can transform your home. You and your family can be at home in Christ's love.

The world, the flesh, and the devil are manipulating Christians. They seek to squeeze believers into their mindless mold. This world system is at war with Jesus Christ and hates those who follow Him. What should we do? How can we hold God's truth firmly, especially in our families? As you know, the world has a warped view of love; what the Lord calls lust, the world calls love. So, in today's text, we will see how important it is to learn what it means to be at home in Christ's love. This would be a great theme for your home during the upcoming holidays. Ephesians chapters 5 and 6 help us to serve others through the Lord's enabling love. And in a warped world gone mad, those around us really need for us to model this message.

### Love in Ephesians

Consider the life-changing power of the Lord's love. In Ephesians 1:4, we learn that believers were chosen to be holy and blameless before God in love. According to Ephesians 1:15, the Ephesian believers successfully demonstrated this love for all the saints. We can too! Yes, we were sinners in rebellion against God (Ephesians 2:1-4). What made the difference? ***"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us."*** That love turned repentant rebels into righteous believers! And now we can pray like Paul for all the members of our congregation (Ephesians 3:17-18): ***"that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye [plural], being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;"*** [of that love]. Such prayer (Ephesians 3:19) enables us to ***"know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that ye [plural] might be filled with all the fullness of God."*** And this love works in us so that we can walk worthy of our calling, (Ephesians 4:1-2) ***"with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."*** And (Ephesians 4:15) ***"speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."*** Look around at your fellow believers. This is the way we can grow: we can grow together. Speaking God's truth, helps us all to be at home in Christ's love. As it says in Ephesians 5:2, ***"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor."*** We can serve others through the Lord's enabling love; we can model this message.

Here is one way to think about this transforming love: **L** – Living for **O** – Others **V** – Victory for **E** – Eternity. That's what Jesus did for us. He lived the righteous life we should have lived and died the sinner's death that each of us should have died. He lived (and lives again) for your victory for eternity.

As followers of God (5:1), this is how we should walk. If you know that Christ has loved you then you can love others with His self-sacrificial love. On the cross of Calvary, He gave Himself as a sacrifice to God, and God the Father raised Him from the dead. Now you and I can live out the power of His resurrection and love others with a self-sacrificial love. And this love from heaven can transform our homes.

### **At Home in Christ's Love**

How does this love of Christ show itself in the home? Ephesians 5:25 says, **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it;”** Ephesians 5:28 **So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”** Ephesians 5:33 **Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.**

It certainly seems to go without saying; but then again in a wicked world gone mad, we had better say it. The word “husband” translates the Greek word [*andros*] meaning “a male person, an adult human male, *man, husband*, in contrast to woman.”<sup>i</sup> But now we read that our society sneers at definitions such as this one. “Wife” translates [*guna*] meaning “an adult female person.”<sup>ii</sup> Now if you are thinking something like, “Well, duh,” then you haven’t been reading the news. These basic definitions are now in dispute by a wicked world. More about that in a moment. When you trace God’s love through Ephesians, it leads you home – yes, to your home. Consider this question answered in verse 25. How (or in what way) is a husband to love his wife? Answer: as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Men, it’s clear that Christ’s love and Christ’s example can change us – and we should take this truth home. Each man should love his wife with the same tender concern with which he treats his own body.

In John 13:34, Jesus said, **“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”** How is that a new commandment? **“Love thy neighbor”** first appeared in the Old Testament in Leviticus 19:18. It’s a “new commandment” because Jesus amplified the quality of that love with the words **“as I have loved you.”** Our understanding of **“Husbands, love your wives”** is amplified and fleshed out with the words **“even as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it.”** Jesus, the Head of the Body (the Church) closely identified Himself with His Church. He asked Saul, the persecutor (who would become a repentant preacher), “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4; 22:7). Christ loved His body as Himself. He showed us how men ought to love their wives as their own bodies and protect them. The summary of the Biblical pattern is found in Ephesians 5:33. Each man is to love his wife with a self-sacrificial love; each wife is to show respect for her husband, just as the church does to Christ. And this is how we take the truth home for our children and grandchildren to see. We can be at home in Christ’s love. Of course, this divinely given pattern is quite a contrast to the culture around us.

### **Counter Cultural**

In recent messages, we discussed the pattern of psychological manipulation known as “gaslighting.” According to one authority, “The goal of a gaslighter is to isolate you so that you

become more dependent on the gaslighter for their version of reality.”<sup>iii</sup> This is what the world is trying to do to our congregation: isolate individuals and change the way they see reality. Since we advocate a Biblical view of marriage, the world calls us “homophobes.” We are not “homophobes” (an insulting slur, now common in our culture); we are “theophobes.” By this I mean that we do not fear homosexuals, but we do fear God. But increasingly in our depraved culture, to believe and practice the fear of God is unacceptable. Even to emphasize the Biblical teaching about marriage is considered an outrage. Here are two examples: Chick-Fil-A™ and The Salvation Army™.

On April 13, 2018, Dan Piepenbring wrote an article in *The New Yorker* entitled, “Chick-fil-A’s Creepy Infiltration of New York City.” He wrote, “[Chick-fil-A’s] arrival here feels like an infiltration, in no small part because of its pervasive Christian traditionalism. Its headquarters, in Atlanta, are adorned with Bible verses and a statue of Jesus washing a disciple’s feet. Its stores close on Sundays. Its C.E.O., Dan Cathy, has been accused of bigotry for using the company’s charitable wing to fund anti-gay causes, including groups that oppose same-sex marriage.”<sup>iv</sup> Now be sure you understand what that writer is saying. Because Chick-Fil-A™ supports a Biblical view of marriage, they are called anti-gay bigots.

Very shortly, you will see the red kettles of the Salvation Army appear outside local businesses. This campaign to help people has traditionally been kicked off by a Thanksgiving Day game featuring the Dallas Cowboys in the National Football League. This year, the British singer, Ellie Goulding, is scheduled to sing for the halftime show. But she has asked the Salvation Army to make policy changes because critics have called the organization “homophobic” and “transphobic.” The Salvation Army is on record as serving “everyone regardless of “race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity ... ” “Goulding issued a statement saying that she would “have no choice but to pull out unless they very quickly make a solid, committed pledge or donation to the LGBTQ community,” according to the Dallas Morning News. Adding that her “heart has always been in helping the homeless,” Goulding said “supporting an anti-LGBTQ charity is clearly not something I would ever intentionally do.”<sup>v</sup> What do we learn about our culture’s “tolerance” (thinly disguised intolerance) from these commentaries about Chick-fil-A and the Salvation Army? Though both organizations serve everyone, without discrimination, that is not enough for the leading critics in our culture. No, these critics insist that these organizations ought to affirm and support their lifestyle; they should stop supporting those who affirm a Biblical stance on marriage.

There is a very common criticism against Christianity by LGBTQ critics, and there is some truth in it. Here is the accusation: while condemning the LGBTQ lifestyle, we fail to condemn the sexually immoral heterosexual lifestyles. We must be sure that we are being Biblical on this point, speaking the truth [Biblical doctrine] in love. Of course, the Bible condemns both lifestyles as sinful and destructive, and we must be willing to say so. But more importantly, we ought to live out our lives in the fear of God by modeling the Biblical teaching on marriage and family.

Our study of love in the Book of Ephesians comes to an end with Ephesians 6:23-24: **Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.**

The love of which we speak is love combined with faith, not love combined with folly. Trust is at the heart of this faithful love we enjoy from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. So God's grace is upon believers, who have a sincere love for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are accepted in the Beloved (Jesus Christ). Have you set your heart at rest in this love? Are you at home in Christ's love? And has that love permeated your home life? We can all take this truth home by learning more about the love of Christ.

### **Discussion Questions**

When did you find rest for your soul by embracing the Lord's love? How has God's love changed the way you look at life?

Who can share a story of a self-sacrificial believer in your past who has made a powerful impact on your life?

How can we grow together as a congregation?

If speaking the truth in love helps us to grow together, would you be willing to share one or two of your favorite Bible verse?

How (what suggestions) would you give to a husband and a wife to help them model the Bible's teaching about marriage?

*Pastor Gordon Dickson, Calvary Baptist Church, Findlay, Ohio*

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<sup>i</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 79.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Marisa Lascalea, "What Is Gaslighting (and How Can You Tell if It's Happening to You)?" Good Housekeeping, April 15, 2019, accessed at <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/relationships/a27129617/what-is-gaslighting/>

<sup>iv</sup> Dan Piepenbring, "Chick-fil-A's Creepy Infiltration of New York City," The New Yorker, April 13, 2018. Accessed at <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-gastronomy/chick-fil-as-creepy-infiltration-of-new-york-city>

<sup>v</sup> Martin M. Barillas, "Singer threatened to pull out of fundraiser at NFL game over Salvation Army's LGBT stance" LifeSite News, November 15, 2019. Accessed at <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/singer-threatened-to-pull-out-of-fundraiser-at-nfl-game-over-salvation-armys-lgbt-stance>