

Husbands, Love your Wives - Ephesians 5:25 - 33

Introduction

I read this quote earlier in the week and thought it was appropriate for our time together this morning.

Whenever you preach, be sure that you lift the Savior high and lay the sinner low. —John Wilmot

So buckle your seat belts gentlemen we are about to dig into what God expects of you as a husband. We all have work in this area so there shouldn't be one toe left unstepped on when I'm done.

There is a horrible joke going around these days and it goes something like this, "The wife says, you never tell me you love me. The man responds, I told you I loved you the day we married. If anything changes, I'll let you know". We might smile at the idiocy of such a statement, but the reality should come along right behind that and make us pause. Is that what I have done to my wife? Have I essentially told her I loved her and ignored her from then on? Some of you have. Is that what the Bible has commanded you as a husband to be to your wife? While we have been going through the imperatives, or commands, of Ephesians these last few months we have been coming back again and again to the idea of turning who you are, in Christ, into how you live, in this world. So tell me husband do you love your wife like the child of God that you are, or do you love your wife like the world does - in essence, she should just assume I love her until I tell her different. By the way, that doesn't work for you husband, so it would be far beyond self-deceit to think that it will work for your wife. No, this is not what it looks like. Jesus calls us to something far better, far beyond our ability alone to accomplish and, if I can say it this way, he calls us to something other-worldly. Husbands the verses we are about to expound upon are, to me, some of the most challenging in all of Scripture. These few verses are going to hit us where we will live and they are going to reveal in us a stunning lack of Christ-likeness that should be astonishing to any who live even a lightly examined life.

Since that is the case we should listen extremely close to the message from God's word today on what He expects us as husbands to be like, but first, let's pray.

Context

Verses twenty-two through twenty-four talked about the wife's responsibility to submit to, or respect, her husband. I wanted to mention something about that before we get into our verses today as it pertains to husbands. Husbands, does the fact that God commands a wife to submit

to her own husband also mean that a husband should command his wife to submit as well? No, no it doesn't. In fact we have before us in verses twenty-five through thirty-three what your responsibility to your wife is and nowhere in sight is there a reference to you being her Holy Spirit. Lover, yes. Holy Spirit, no.

And with that little bit of catchup work, let's dig into our text for the day in verse twenty-five. This is what God's word says,

Command

**25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*

The command is to "love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her". Recognize something with me here. Look back on verses twenty-two to twenty-five and notice the wife's position in the metaphor. She is the Church. She is supposed to act like the Church acts. She has been put in a position of submission to authority. Now read your command again husband, you are to be like Christ! You are to be the one in authority. You are to be the example to be followed and God has not given you an easy task but a gigundous undertaking in that he commands you to be like God! He commands you to give up yourself for your wife, and please, please don't think of this as merely stepping in front of the bullet for her. That is not the point. This is not a one-time act of giving up and your free to go on your way NO! This is a lifestyle of dying to yourself. This is a life long, yours or hers, commitment to giving up what you want for the sake of another. Christ gave up his life for you and you are to give up your life for her. Can you see how much easier it would be for your wife to yield her will, if your will, were all about Christ's will, for her?! Let me say that again for you. It's important. Can you see how much easier it would be for your wife to yield her will, if your will, were all about Christ's will, for her?

What does giving up your life look like? It means whatever is on television tonight is not more important than your wife. It means that any and all extracurricular activities you might enjoy take a distant backseat to your wife. It means work should be done with her in mind first. Listen fellas if the constant chorus of your wife is, "Why aren't you home"? Perhaps you need to reevaluate what you are doing and how much time you spend doing it. Are you spending all of that time at work because it's easier to lead the people there than it is to lead your wife at home? Is it easier to play nine holes than it is to help her all day with the kids? It's certainly easier to sit in front of the TV in a vegetative state than it is to talk with her and find out what she is thinking, doing, loving... What would happen in our wives hearts if we spent the same amount of time thinking about God's word and how it applies to our wives strengths, so we can encourage her, and weaknesses, so we can patiently guide her in the way Christ would have us to? In short, she would be "like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither".

Cause

Paul moves on to answer the obvious question of the reader. Why would you do such a thing as give up yourself for your wife? What would the reason be for doing such a thing? Read verses twenty-six through twenty-eight with me. This is what God's word says,

*26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 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. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

You, again, are called to be like Christ and he is at work setting his church apart, sanctifying her. You are to give yourself up for her, setting her apart. How, by cleansing her by the washing of water with the word. This does not mean that you can throw a bucket of water at her with a twenty-five minute devotional in the morning and call it a day for loving your wife. Picture it like this, we have two dear saints at the end of their journey here on earth and the woman has had some health issue that has rendered her all but helpless. These two dear saints have lived with and loved one another for a long time, he values her as no one else on earth and he wishes nothing more than to serve his dear wife in the best way. Will he sit and watch as the dirt and grime of being alive mount up on his beloved? Will he wait and watch as the feces and urine bring about rot in the body of his sister? Will he wait until bedsores and disease devastate her? Or will he set the temperature of the room to what fits her need, and gently remove her clothing each morning while running warm water for her daily bath. He will gently caress his beloved, washing away any dirt that has mounted up from yesterday, he will lovingly dress her in the finest and most comfortable pajamas he can. She will not be forgotten and ill cared for but she will be cherished and washed as the prize from his Savior that she truly is. Are you doing this with your wife? Are you washing her gently with the word daily? Are you patient and gentle, your loving kindness being what attracts her to you and brings about in her a submissive attitude that loves to be your helper? This is what a husband who loves Christ above all does. He takes the time that is needed to lovingly teach his wife what the word of God says. He is patient when she doesn't get it the first, second, fifteenth, thirtieth, time just like Jesus is patient with him on the fiftieth, sixtieth time that he fails to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. Oh that we husbands would rise up and care for our wives as Christ cares for the Church. The world would not know what to do against the onslaught of Gospel centered praise from our wives!

Let's go on with our illustration to verse twenty-seven. Will our husband, when God has taken his beloved home leave her body to rot until the smell of the carcass is too much and finally have it removed so that he can change the sheets and get back to sleeping in his own bed? Or will he go to the closet that still smells of her and pick out the most beautiful dress there and having been given the privilege of dressing her once and for all take the time to make sure the dress is spotless and just so, that the folks who come to say their final goodbyes will have the best view of his beloved. When your wife leaves this world gentlemen, how will she be dressed?

Will she as Jesus has done for you, be "in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" on that day. Or will she be full of spots and wrinkles, with blemishes head to toe from neglect - a lack of spiritual care that would be appalling and perhaps criminal if it were physical? Husbands, this cannot be! You cry and wail that your wives do not submit, but fight and complain and the reality is they have never had a Christ like example to follow so what do you expect? You say, but my wife is a disaster. If all your time and effort is spent at work or on your precious little hobbies then you are merely reaping what you have sown. Some wives need more time and work than others. I understand that. The problem is you don't even know how much time your wife requires!

Not only are you to wash her and dress her to be presentable in the last day as Christ has the Church but here's the kicker you are to love her as much as you already love yourself. Would you leave yourself to languish in a state of putrid self-denial? No, of course you wouldn't you would care for yourself, pick out a nice comfy chair to sit in. Make sure the temperature is just right for you in the room. Set aside enough money in the budget for golf, or the car you really want. Would you allow yourself to starve or would you get up and fix yourself something yummy to eat. Yes, wives, if he had to he would actually cook. He does and would take care of himself well. God expects you to take care of your wife at least as well as you take care of yourself. The reasons for this will become clear at the end of the passage.

Look down with me at verse twenty-nine and we'll see what he compares our love of our wives to. This is what God's word says,

Comparison

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

What a glorious truth fellas. We know we nourish and cherish our own bodies and that's exactly what Christ has done for us. Think about that for a moment. You are to nourish, that is to feed your wife, and cherish, to cultivate her with care and affection. Do you see what this is saying. In some sense your wife's growth and maturity are directly related to you. Just as our growth and maturity as Christians is directly related to the grace of Christ. If your wife isn't all that you thought she would be maybe the problem is you. Think about it men. Have you ever looked at another man's wife and thought, boy, I wish my wife acted like that. It's like the old saying, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence". Why is that? Because the guy on the other side of the fence has been working hard all year long to love, nourish and cherish his wife and, surprise, she turned into a godly woman. Paul doesn't stop there. It gets better.

Why does Christ care for us, and in turn why do we care for our wives, because we are members of one body. Christ has made us part of his body, the church and God has, verse thirty-one made you and your wife one body. Remember what he said back in verse twenty-eight? He said, "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." Do you see it now? She is you and you are her. God has made you one flesh and your treatment of her and care for her is a reflection of how you care for yourself. Do you think Christ cares for you like you care for your wife. No? Then you have a lot of work to do. You are to look like Christ to her. You are to sacrifice it all for the sake of your body, for the sake of your beloved and you want to tell me that it's just too difficult to deal with her on a day to day basis. You have never been beaten, wiped, mocked, nailed to a cross and taken the wrath of almighty God upon yourself for your beloved and yet the one who has called you to this COMMANDS you to love her as he loved you. What better thing could there be in your life and yet you choose to watch TV and play golf and bad mouth her to your friends. Wake up! The evidence of your belief, or lack of, is lying in bed beside you. Does it look like belief in your bed?

The greatest, if not obvious point, of all of this, comes in verse thirty-two. We read it, but let's do it again, look at it, **32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.** Your marriage is to look like the Gospel! If it doesn't you have failed and need to repent of your sin and love your wife. Many of you like to talk about theology, you like to talk about how Christians should be changing the culture. You like to talk about the latest theological argument in the blogosphere, but it's all for nothing if when your neighbor looks through the front window of your home it looks a bombed out city with souls lying about dead and dying. Our marriages gentlemen are to look like the gospel. No one would question your faith if your marriage screamed Jesus to them when they saw you with your wife. Hey, they might not even know what the Gospel is but that profound mystery should be a little bit clearer to them as they see you give up your life for the one under your authority. As they see you care for her in a way that can only be explained as other worldly, or supernatural. Men, you have the opportunity to share the Gospel with your wives, with your children, with your neighbors and to the ends of the earth by loving your wives. You are commanded to, you mustn't fail. Turn who you are, the bride of Christ, into how you live, being Christ to your bride and show the world Jesus in a way they cannot scoff at and disregard!

In verse thirty-two Paul does what you've seen him do before in this letter, he comes down from the heights of the Gospel back to an earthly reminder to husbands and wives. God's word says this in verse thirty-two,

33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Paul is about to talk about children's responsibility and he prepares the adults in the family for this talk as he wraps up his talk with them by giving them this gentle reminder. Yes, this is all about Christ and the church. This is about profound mysteries and Heavenly realities, but don't

loose sight of reality when you wake up to your spouse tomorrow who will likely have bed-head, morning breath and may be in for a tough day spiritually. Husbands, you love your wives as you would yourself and wives be respectful to your husbands for in these everyday things we reveal Christ to the world.

Reflect and Respond

If you are here today and you do not know Christ as your savior you face an impossible task. God has commanded you to love your wife as Christ loved the Church but you have no way of doing so. You are helpless without Christ and can know nothing of his self-sacrificial love for his Church because you are a stranger and an enemy of God. You may not have even known what was required of you until now, but you will be held accountable for these things on the day of judgment. You are without excuse and the task at hand is far too large for you to handle alone. You have but one choice to make and one only. You must decide today whether you will surrender your life, your will, your everything to King Jesus the great lover of the Church, or walk out of here and continue to fail your wife and God; heaping judgment upon yourself every moment of every day. Don't. Christ gave his life for the Church and made it possible for you to be free from every spot, wrinkle and blemish of sin. He has provided a way for you to be part of his body. Won't you come to him today and live for the first time, truly live.

Believing husband all of us sit here today with at least a mountain of work to do in our marriages and if you are sitting here thinking that Tom, Dick, and Harry have a lot of work to do in their marriage you have missed the point and your pride has blinded you to the truth that you are but a man and need all the grace you have been given in Christ to love your wife in this way. You won't ever be the perfect husband that Scripture calls you to be, but your Savior is and he will bring you closer and closer as you die to yourself and give your wants and desires to him. Remember our story about the old couple gentlemen, this should be you with your wives. Wash them in the word. Prepare them for the day they meet our Savior. And show Christ to a dying world by loving them as he loved his Church. It's a tall order and God will give you the grace to fulfill it.