

God's Calling for Husbands

Ephesians 5:25-33

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This morning we are looking at *God's Calling for Husbands and Fathers*. Last month, we looked at *God's Calling for Wives and Mothers*, so today I want to spend our time addressing husbands and fathers. It is true that we're living in a day where we're watching the disintegration of marriage as we know it. With the rise of homosexuality and lesbianism, the traditional marriage of a man and a woman is almost becoming extinct in our society. On Thursday, June 8, 2006, the Senate voted to end debate on a federal amendment to the Constitution stating that marriage is between a man and a woman. The vote was 49-48 leaving it stalled in debate (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,198511,00.html>). Years ago, such an amendment was not needed because everyone understood that marriage between a man and a woman was the cornerstone of society but not so today. Some years ago, there was an article published in the *Saturday Evening Post* entitled "The Seven Ages of the Married Cold. In this article was a not-so-funny look at the decline of marriage as seen through the common cold. It went like this:

The first year: "Sugar dumpling, I'm really worried about my baby girl. You've got a bad snuffle, and there's no telling about these things with all this strep throat going around. I'm putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general checkup and a good rest. I know the food's lousy, but I'll be bringing your meals in from Rossini's. I've already got it all arranged with the floor superintendent."

The second year: "Listen, darling, I don't like the sound of that cough. I called Doc Miller and asked him to rush over here. Now go to bed like a good girl, please? Just for papa."

The third year: "Maybe you'd better lie down, honey; nothing like a little rest when you feel lousy. I'll bring you something to eat. Have got any canned soup?"

The fourth year: "Now look, dear, be sensible. After you've fed the kids, washed the dishes, and finished the floor, you'd better lie down."

The fifth year: "Why don't you take a couple of aspirin?"

The sixth year: "I wish you'd just gargle or something, instead of sitting around all evening barking like a seal!"

The seventh year: "For Pete's sake, stop sneezing! Are you trying to give me pneumonia?"

Psychologist Carl Rogers in his book *Becoming Partners: Marriage and Its Alternatives*, said, "To me it seems that we are living in an important and uncertain age, the institution of marriage is most assuredly in an uncertain state. If 50 to 75 percent of Ford or General Motors' cars completely fell apart within the early part of their lifetimes as automobiles, drastic steps would be taken. We have no such well organized way of dealing with our social institutions, so people are groping, more or less blindly, to find alternatives to marriage (which is certainly less than 50 percent successful). Living together without marriage, living in communes, extensive child care centers, serial monogamy (with one divorce after another), the women's liberation movement to establish the woman as a person in her own right, new divorce laws which do away with the concept of guilt-these are all groping toward some new form of man-woman relationship for the future. It would take a bolder man than I to predict what will emerge" [New York: Delacorte, 1972], p. 11). Carl Rogers admits that in trying those alternatives to marriage people are "groping" for a new definition of man-woman relationships. But we don't need to grope; all

we need to do is to go back to the Creator to find out how these relationships ought to work. After all, God made us—He must know. Carl Rogers said it would take a bolder man than he to predict what will happen to marriage. The Bible itself predicts what will happen in 2 Timothy 3.

Notice in verse 1 what Paul says, “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come” (NASB). The “last days” are going to be identified as “difficult” or “dangerous.” Verse 13, which is a summary of those perilous times, says, “But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (NASB). In other words, it’s going to get worse—not better.

Verses 2-6 tell us what will characterize those “difficult” and “dangerous” days. First is *self-love*. Verse 2 says, “For men will be lovers of self” (NASB). The first characteristic of the last days noted here is that there will be an overwhelming sense of self-centeredness, selfishness, self-absorption, self-indulgence, and self-satisfaction. People will be looking at what they can get. There will be a time in the last days where men will become more and more in love with themselves. Another characteristic of the last days is mentioned at the end of verse 2: “disobedient to parents” (NASB). Children will lose their sense of respect and lack of proper perspective of authority. There will be *rebellion in the family*, and no obedience will be shown to parents. We’re seeing this today. Juvenile crime is increasing at a rate beyond comprehension and disobedience to parents is part of the problem. Another interesting characteristic as it relates to the family is found in verse 3. It says, “unloving” or in the Authorized Version it reads “without natural affection.” This is the Greek word *astorgoi* which comes from *storge*, “familial or family affection.” When you put the “a” in front of a word, it means “without.” *Astorgoi* literally means, “without familial affection” or “without family affection.” Verse 6 gives the fourth characteristic when it says, “For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses” (NASB). The home is going to become fair game for every con man and sexual pervert. It’s all going to come crashing down on the home, God’s basic unit of human society. The only answer to this is found in Ephesians chapter 5.

Ephesians 5:22-33 is the greatest treatise on marriage ever written. Here we see marriage as it was before the Fall, where a wife submitted lovingly to her husband’s care, protection, and leadership, and where a husband lovingly and sacrificially gave himself to meet every need of his wife, whom he lifted up and exalted with all his heart. Now if we’re going to see that kind of relationship in our marriages, Christ must be at the center, and the Spirit of God must be controlling us. In other words, once a person is “in Christ” (Eph. 1-3) and “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18), it becomes possible for a wife to submit to her husband and a husband to love his wife. The Christian marriage as God designed it and as Paul discusses it in Ephesians 5 is a reverse of the Fall. Notice what it says in Ephesians 5:22-33.

22 “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall

become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (New King James Version).

Here in Ephesians 5, Paul uses the picture of marriage to illustrate the relationship Jesus has to His church. He says in verse 22, that wives, like the church, are to submit to the one who is in authority over them. In this case it is her husband. In the case of the church it is Christ. Verses 23-24 says, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." In verse 22 then, we see that God calls all wives to submit to their husband's headship. In the words of Colossians 3:18, they are to "submit to [their] own [husband], as is fitting in the Lord." In verse 25, the husband is to love his wife "just as Christ also loved the church." And how did He love the church? Paul says He "gave Himself for it, that He might cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (vv.25-27). Just as Jesus gave up His life for the people He would save, the husband is to give up his life for his wife. In other words, he is to "love" his wife as he loves himself. Paul says in verse 33: "Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

When you look back at Genesis 2 where God said that "it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (v.18), you then read in verse 20 that Adam gave names "to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him" (NASB). Then in verse 21-22 God provides a suitable helper to aid Adam as he rules the pure and undefiled world of creation. Notice that from the beginning, God designed someone to be in charge and someone to help; someone to be in authority and someone to be submissive; someone to be the leader and someone to be the follower; someone to take care of the provisions and someone to be provided for. The man protected, provided, preserved, and cared for the woman. She was a fitting, or suitable helper for him. In verse 23 Adam meets his wife and says, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man" (NASB). The chapter concludes by saying, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (vv.24-25, NASB).

Here was a perfect relationship. Adam saw his wife, Eve, as one with him in every sense—that was God's design. He was the leader, and she was to follow his lead. He had responsibility for her, and she was under his responsibility. The woman's submissiveness was willing, and the man's provision was willing. There was no animosity—no struggle or fighting—nothing but a perfectly glorious union. In Ephesians 5:25-33, we see a return to this. The apostle's instructions to husbands are simple: Love your wives. Love them as Christ loved the church. Cherish them. Honor them. Protect them. Serve them. Lead them. You are the head of the wife in the same sense that Christ is the head of the church.

Let's examine that more closely as we look at verse 25 and *the meaning of love*. He says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it."

I. The Meaning of Love (v.25)

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.”

A. What It Does Not Mean

“Ask many Christian husbands to summarize their biblical duty in one word, and they will answer, ‘leadership.’ Scripture answers the question with a different word: ‘love.’ There is no doubt that God’s design for husbands includes the aspect of leadership. But it is a leadership that flows from love and is always tempered by tender, caring affection” (John MacArthur, *What the Bible Says About Parenting*, 162).

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones says husbands are “the head, [they] are the leader, [they] are as it were the lord in this relationship; but because [they] love [their] wives the leadership will never become a tyranny, and though [they] are ‘lord’ [they] will never become a tyrant...So as the husband exercises his privilege as the head of the wife, and the head of the family, he does so in this way. He is to be controlled always by love, and he is to be controlled by discipline. He must discipline himself. There may be the tendency to dictate, but he must not do so—‘power, love, sound mind’ (discipline). All that is implicit here in this great word ‘love’” (*Life in the Spirit*, 132).

B. What It Does Mean

The word Paul uses here for “love” is the familiar Greek word *agapao* (verb, pres.act.imp.). This is a word that means “to demonstrate or show one’s love” (Louw-Nida).

1 John 3:18 uses it in this way: “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth” (NASB).

1. *Agapao* refers to self-sacrifice which is the highest expression of love.

A.T. Robertson calls it “the high-water mark of love” (Robertson’s *Word Pictures*).

a) John 15:13 defines it as “to lay down one’s life for his friends.”

b) Romans 5:6, 8 takes it further to describe those “friends” as those who are “ungodly” and “sinners.”

God sent Christ to die on the behalf of those who were “ungodly” and “sinners.”

John MacArthur, says, “That sort of self-less, undeserved love is completely beyond human comprehension. Yet that is the love that the just and infinitely holy God had toward us even while we were yet sinners. The God who hates every sinful thought and every sinful deed nevertheless loves the sinners who think and do those things, even while they are still hopelessly enmeshed in their sin. Even when men openly hate God and do not have the least desire to give up their sin, they are still the objects of God’s

redeeming love as long as they live. Only at death does an unbeliever cease to be loved by God. After that, he is eternally beyond the pale of God's love and is destined irrevocably for His wrath" (The MacArthur NT Commentary, Romans).

This is the highest expression of love and this is how husbands are to love their wives—"just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it."

2. Husbands are to love in this way. They are to love as God loves.

"The husband who thinks God ordered the family so that his wife would be at his beck and call has it backwards. He is to love and serve her. The father who thinks of his wife and children as personal possessions to be under his command has a skewed concept of the responsibility that is his as head of the family. His headship means first of all that he is to serve them, protect them, and provide for their needs" (John MacArthur, *What the Bible Says About Parenting*, 164).

II. The Manner of Love (vv.26-33)

Referring back to verse 23, notice again that the whole idea of the husband's headship is a comparison to Christ.

The husband's headship over the wife is likened to Christ's headship over the church: "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church."

The husband's love for his wife is supposed to be like Christ's love for the church.

Notice how Christ's kind of love for His church:

A. It is Sacrificial (v.25)

Look again at verse 25 and I will not labor the point but just to remind you that this is where it all begins.

If the husband is to love his wife like Christ loves the church, then he is to have the same kind of love that is sacrificial.

"Sacrificial love is undeserved, yet it goes to the furthest extremity, as exemplified in Christ. It says, 'You don't deserve anything, but I'll give you everything. You don't deserve anything, but I'll die for you. You don't deserve even My best, but I'll give you My life. And Paul is saying that we are to say to our wives, 'You may not deserve all those things, you may be a sinner, and you may not be all that you could be, but that is never the issue. I love you and commit myself to you, even if you are the least deserving. And I will give you everything I have—even to the point of dying for you'" (Taken from John MacArthur's sermon, "The Duty of the Husband" Series: The Fulfilled Family).

John Chrysostom, a great preacher in the early church, said this to husbands who might have been tempted to preoccupy themselves with defining the measure of obedience they expected from their wives:

“Hear also the measure of love. Wouldest thou have thy wife obedient unto thee, as the Church is to Christ? Taken then thyself the same provident care for her as Christ takes for the Church. Yea, even if it shall be needful for thee to give thy life for her, yea, and to be cut into pieces then thousand times, yea, and to endure and undergo all this, yet wilt thou not, no, not even then, have done anything like Christ. For thou indeed art doing it for one to whom thou are already knit; but He for one who turned her back on Him and hated Him. In the same way then as He laid at His feet her who turned her back on Him, who hated, and spurned, and disdained Him, not by menaces, not by violence, nor by terror, nor by anything else of the kind, but by his unwearied affection; so also do thou behave thyself toward thy wife. Yea, though thou see her looking down upon thee, and disdain, and scorning thee, yet by thy great thoughtfulness for her, by affection, by kindness, thou wilt be able to lay her at thy feet...Yea, though thou shouldst suffer anything on her account, do not upbraid her; for neither did Christ do this” (Homilies on Ephesians, Homily 20 [Ephesians 5:25]).

Many men are constantly quoting Ephesians 5:22, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” but how many men are willing to fulfill all that is demanded of *them* in verses 25-33?

1. Love as it is used here is a command

Agapao is a present active imperative verb which means that the love that Paul is calling for from husbands to their wives it to be *continual* and it is a *command*.

In general, believers are commanded to love one another but specifically believing husbands are commanded to love their wives. This is not an option nor is it based on certain feelings that you have for your wife. It is based on the command of Scripture.

2. The key to this entire chapter is *submission*

- a) Verse 21 says that when believers are “filled with the Spirit,” they will be “submitting to one another in the fear of God.”
- b) Not only are wives to “submit” according to verse 22, but husbands are also called to submit by *how* they love their wives.

Notice the second kind of love that Christ has for His church which is also to be true of Christian husbands:

B. It is Purifying (vv.26-27)

“26 That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

1. Christ's love for the church included purification

The greatest and highest kind of love is that which seeks to purify and not defile the one loved.

When you love someone, his purity is your goal. No one loves something and then want to defile it. Christ loved His church, so He wanted to purify His people.

2. Christ purifies His church

a) He does that *initially* at salvation

The very moment a person believes he is "sanctified" and "cleansed" from his sin.

"Sanctify" Gr.hagiazō, means, to "set-apart," "to make holy, consecrate" (GING)

"Cleanse" Gr.katharizō, means to "make clean, cleanse, purify" (GING)

At salvation, Christ makes you holy and clean from your sin.

The Bible says:

- (1) Christ has "forgiven you all trespasses" (Col.2:13).
- (2) Christ has cleansed you so that "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool" (Isa.1:18).
- (3) Psalm 103:12 says that He has removed your sin "as far as the east is from the west."
- (4) Micah 7:9 says that He then cast them "into the depths of the sea."

Sanctification and purification occur *initially* at salvation but it also occurs daily in the believer's life.

b) He does that daily

In John 13:10 Jesus says to Peter, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet" (NASB).

"In the Orient, a man would get up in the morning and bathe himself. Then, as he went through the day and his feet got dirty, he would wash them as they needed it" (MacArthur).

When you were saved you were totally cleansed positionally before God. But everyday

that you walk through the world you need your feet washed. 1 John 1:9 teaches that Christ keeps on cleansing us from all sin.

In other words, you were bathed once, and you're continuously kept pure.

3. The husband is to purify his wife

That means that he wants only the best for his wife. He cannot bear for her to be corrupted or misled by anything evil or harmful.

As her husband, he seeks to love her, lift her up, draw her to God, pour virtue into her life, and make her, in every possible way, like Christ.

He will never put her in a compromising situation or do anything to defile her. His love will always seek to purify her.

C. It is Caring (vv.28-30)

“28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.”

1. Husbands are to love their wives in the same way they love themselves

With the same care you show your own body you are to show toward your wife. When your wife has a need you are to meet it just as you would for your self.

2. Verse 29 points out a basic truth: “no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it”

“Nourishes” Gr.ektrepho, means, “to nourish” or “feed.” It was primarily used in reference to nurturing or raising children. It simply means ‘to mature.’

Men were called to nurture their wives, to bring them to maturity, and to provide for their needs. The word ektrepho also literally means “to feed.” This means that the husband is to be the provider. This is never said of the wife. She is not the provider. She is the one who is provided for.

“Cherishes” Gr.thalpo, literally means, “to soften or warm with body heat.” It is used to describe a bird sitting on her nest (cf. Deut.22:6).

Husbands are to literally provide a secure, warm, soft place as a provision for their wives. Husbands are to provide security. This is relinquished in the case of the working mother. She should not be the one who nourishes and feeds; she should receive that provision.

This is the kind of care that Christ has for His church. He feeds and provides for her.

D. It is Unbreakable (vv.31-33)

“31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

1. This is a direct quote from Genesis 2:24
2. It emphasizes the permanent union that Christ has with His church and the husband to his wife
 - a) The Greek word leipo means, “to leave” but the word here is used here is in an intensified form, kataleipo, and means, “to abandon completely.”

Married couples run into a big problem if they don’t leave their mothers and fathers and completely when they step into the marriage relationship. This doesn’t mean that you stop talking to them but it does mean that you don’t run to them anymore for everything. Your dependence has now shifted from your parents to your partner.

- b) The word “joined” is proskollao, which is an intensified form of the word kallao which means “to connect up.” Proskollao means “to glue together.”

“The idea is that you are to leave, and then you are to glue the new relationship together. It is a new relationship, absolutely unbreakable. Two become one” (MacArthur).

3. Paul describes this “great mystery” as the church and charges the husband to “love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (vv.32-33).

CONCLUSION

As we close this morning, let me ask you a few questions: Are you loving your wife in this way? Are you sacrificing your life by putting your own likes, desires, opinions, preferences, and welfare aside in order to please your wife and meet her needs? Are you seeking to love her, lift her up, draw her to God, pour virtue into her life, and make her, in every possible way, like Christ? Are you seeking to provide a secure, warm, soft place as a provision for their wives? You are to “love” your wife in this manner. I know that I didn’t say much about “father” but you cannot be a good father until you’re a good “husband.” So put your priority there and the other will naturally follow.