

The Church's Married Men

Ephesians 5:15-33

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Introduction:

In our sermon series on *The Christian in Every Stage of Life*, we are presently looking at the church's married people.

- We began with a general introduction, looking at how marriage is a picture of Christ and His church...
 - the man representing Christ who loves the church and gave Himself for her...
 - and the woman representing the church who submits to Him as her Lord.
- Truly, every marriage is a *picture* of this relationship.
 - Some marriages are a very poor picture, but they are still a picture.
 - The same is true with us being made in God's image... just because sin has marred the picture does not make us cease to be a picture.
 - In fact, that we are a picture of Him is what makes us so guilty when we misrepresent Him.
 - With marriage and with being the image of God, we can be a picture that tells lies—or we can be a picture that tells the truth.

Last week, we looked at married women and their particular calling in their marriage.

- In short, a woman is to submit to her own husband as the church submits to Christ.
 - She is to seek to lose her life in his—to seek to walk in harmony with him by learning what pleases him and conforming to that.
 - She does not lose her identity but finds it in her calling from God when she does this, just as, by submitting to Christ, we lose our life in order to actually find it.
- I showed you how women who do this make their homes into beautiful life-giving places—and how these women are themselves the fruitful vine in the home.
 - Not only do they bring forth godly children, but they also spread life to others, being filled with good works—adorned with them.
 - Sadly our culture rates value of service by the size of a pay cheque, but when good works are done, rich blessing flows freely to others in love for Christ.
- I can't go into all the details of what we looked at last week of course—
 - but truly there is a beauty and a fruitfulness-beyond-measure in women who conform to the pattern that God has appointed for them.

This week, we want to move on to look at married men.

- We will once again start off with a reading of Ephesians 5:15-33.
- This is the Word of God, so give careful attention.

Ephesians 5:15-33: See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹

speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting to one another in the fear of God. ²²Wives, 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.

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy Word.

I. Married men are the head of their household.

A. This is a fact that cannot be changed.

- Paul says that it is so in verse 23... **the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church.**

1. He does not say, "husbands, *be* the head of your wife."

- He tells you that you *are* the head of your wife—whether you want to be or not, whether you know it or not—you are.

2. No bureaucrat can make a law that changes what God has appointed.

- It can be denied, it can be spoken against, but it still remains a fact that in every marriage, the husband is the head.

- The husband has been given responsibility to lead his wife, whether he wants to, whether she wants him to, whether society wants him to...

- God has put him in that position and nothing can change it.

B. The great question for every married man is not: "Are you the head of your marriage?" but rather "What kind of head are you?"

1. Are you a selfish head? There are lots of those.

- They are the ones who use their authority to serve themselves.

- For them headship means that they get to have everyone else at their beck and call, and can't be called to account for what they themselves do.

- Joe Dictator cares about no one but Joe, and he wants his wife to do the same... to care only about Joe.

- He is rather fond of this headship thing... even though it never seems to make him happy or pleasant.

2. Are you an indifferent head? There are lots of these too...

- They are the ones who can't be bothered with looking after their homes.

- They don't want to lead, they don't want to initiate, they don't want to take responsibility for anyone else.

- They are content to just leave their wife alone, each can do their own thing.

- Their motto is, "Don't bother me and I won't bother you."

3. There are many other variations of poor headship...
 - Are you a controlling head who micromanages everything in an obsessive way?
 - a fearful head—who will never act because you are afraid you will do it wrong or will be criticised—like the guy who won't do family worship because he's afraid he won't do it right or because his wife made negative comments about it?
 - an angry or bitter head who uses your position to vent your frustrations—which never gives you any relief anyway?
 - an irresponsible head—who cannot be trusted with anything—you mismanage your finances, don't look after your house, don't provide, and so on...
 - an absentee head?
 - Yes, even if you keep away from your family, you are still their head—just a head who is never around to fulfil your duty. That is how you exhibit Christ.
 - a distracted head, who never pays attention because your concerns are elsewhere?
 - or an intoxicated head... you know, one that is intoxicated with wine, or lust, or with whatever instead of filled with God's Spirit?

TRANS> So let's be clear,

- The Lord does not *call* you to be the head of your home; if you are married, you *are* the head of your home—period. You are representing Christ for good or ill.
 - He does not call you to be the head of your home, but He does call you to be a certain kind of head.

C. The LORD calls you to be a loving head... one who loves your wife even as Christ loves the church.

1. The commandment to you is very plain and clear in verse 25.
 - **Eph 5:25: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,**
2. A loving head is one who exercises authority not for his own sake, but for those under his care—for his wife!
 - a. You realise that you are to lead for her blessing and her benefit.
 - Like Christ, you do not act for your own interests, but for the interests of others.
 - You recognise that God has tied you to her in order to be a blessing to her and to benefit her, not that she might cater to your selfish desires.

➤ When she understands that, she ought to leap for joy!
 - b. In every decision, you must get before the Lord with honesty and integrity to find out what would be best for those under your care.
 - You do that about purchases that are made.
 - You do that about where you will live.
 - You do that about deciding where you should go to church.
 - It is not always, what do they want? but it is always, what is best for them before the Lord.
 - That is responsible leadership—it is taking responsibility to do what is best—not just following what others want.

➤ You must answer to God not only for yourself, but also for them

- c. It also involves taking responsibility for those under your care.
 - You look out for them.
 - You keep up with what their needs are so that you can provide for them with wisdom.
 - Don't act like a stupid block here who can't see anything—learn to see—learn to understand as one who cares.
 - Some men put on this stupid guy routine, but it is really a selfish-guy-who-can't-be-bothered routine, one who wimps out and leaves it all to his wife.
 - If there is sin, you look upon it not only as their sin, but as your sin because you are their head.
 - Just as the owner of a restaurant is responsible for what his servers do, you are responsible for what your wife and children do.
 - If the servers are rude, it rightly casts reflection on the owner and rightly gives him a bad name.
 - When people stop coming to his restaurant, he can't say, "Well it's not me that is rude, it is just my workers."
 - He is their head—he is tied together with them—he is responsible.
 - If they are well trained, he gets the credit for it.
 - People seem to easily recognise the principle about restaurant managers, but they completely miss it with their children
 - A loving husband will realise that if his family is a mess, if there is no love in the home, or no zeal for Christ or no respect for others—it is his fault.
 - He cannot blame them.
 - He will see that it is his responsibility to correct the problem.
 - He will get before God and agonise, he will ask counsel of others, but he will take responsibility.
 - God calls you, as the head, to love your wife as Christ loved the church.
3. What a high standard this is!
- a. As it says, "as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us."
 - Jesus gave Himself to meet our greatest need.
 - God made Him head over us, so He gave Himself for us to die on the cross for our sins—not for His own sins, but for our sins.
 - He took full responsibility for what we had done.
 - Ver. 28 says, **so husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.**
 - You are to take as much interest in them as you do for yourself—to love them as much as Christ loved the church.
 - What a high standard this is!
 - b. God is into high standards.
 - He gives us commandments that we cannot keep.
 - We are fallen and that is why we cannot keep them.

- He does not change them to fit our character because they are tied to His character and He does not change... what is right is right.
 - We cannot keep the standard—we cannot love as Christ loved—but we are to affirm the standard as our standard—to know that this is what we *ought* to do.
 - We will need to rest in Christ for the continual forgiveness of our sins.
 - We will need to look to Him to work in us, so we may grow more and more into this love that he calls us to exercise.
 - A high standard is a good thing because it keeps us looking to Christ.
 - As sinners, we need to do that.
- c. The root of the matter is this...
- A husband is to reflect the beauty of Christ in his marriage by loving his wife as Christ loved the church.
 - What a beautiful thing it is to see a man using his God-given authority to bless others instead of for himself!
 - If this is done, the world will sit up and take notice!
 - If it is not done, we will blend in with everyone else.

II. Now let's look at some of the ways a man ought to love his wife as her head.

A. He is to care for her spiritually.

1. Our walk with the LORD is the most important thing about us.

- Therefore, if a husband loves his wife, if he truly loves her, nothing will matter more to him than her relationship with the living God.
 - It is a matter of eternity.
 - It is a matter of heaven and hell.
 - It is a matter of true happiness and blessing.
- As the one who is appointed by God to be her head,
 - How could he claim to love her if he is indifferent about her spiritual condition?
 - He simply can't. It's impossible.
 - He may be very tender and loving to her in every other way, but if he misses her spiritual care, what kind of love is this?
 - The real problem is that he is indifferent about his own walk with the Lord.
 - But that does not excuse the fact that he is neglecting to love her in this the most important way of all!
 - It just gives him more to answer God for at judgment day!
- On a side note, let me say to you women who are not married—
 - Refuse to marry any man—or to enter into a relationship with any—who does not care about his own walk with Christ.
 - He will not be able to love you by caring about *your* walk with Christ as your head if he doesn't care about his own.
 - He will automatically be a poor head of the home.
 - Get away from such a man as fast as you can.

- You are on the pathway of disaster.
 - Pray that you will find a man who loves God more than he loves you.
2. Our text in Ephesians highlights the spiritual care of Christ for us as our head.
- He certainly provides for us in other ways—but His greatest concern is to reconcile us to the Father and then to grow us up in Him.
 - Look at Eph 5:25-27: **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.**
 - And you see that husbands are then exhorted in the next verse to love their wives in the same way that Christ does.
 - **v. 28: So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies;**
 - Because He is our head, Jesus is one with us, and that made His greatest concern our deliverance from sin.
 - After we have received pardon by faith in Him, He continues to use His Word to wash us—from the sin that is still in us.
 - Husbands are to do this according to their calling as head.
 - Of course you do not need to go to the cross like Jesus did—He has already done that...
 - But you can take the word and wash your wife and family with it every day.
- I have seen some men learn of this duty and take it up in a harsh way...
- That is not at all what the Lord is calling for here...
3. Notice the tender language that is used the husband's duty in verses 28 and 29:
- It is the language you'd use to refer to childcare...nourish and cherish...
 - **Eph 5:28-29: 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.**
 - *Nourish* means to feed and *cherish* means to keep warm.
 - What beautiful, tender language this is to refer to a husband's loving care for his wife.
 - It is not just a raw duty he is to fulfill—he is to aim to nourish her soul, and not only that, but to warm her soul.
 - Men, what a tremendous goal to have when you bring your family to church, when you lead them in daily family worship, when you are walking through life with them...
 - Your goal is to nourish and cherish them in the Lord.
 - You want them to be spiritually warmed and filled!
4. The scriptures speak of the duty to be a spiritual head to your household in other places besides Ephesians.
- a. First, there is the fact that in the ancient world, God arranged things so that husbands acted as the priest of their homes.

- We see this, for example, with Noah, offering sacrifices to God after he came off the ark; and with Jacob gathering his family at Bethel to offer sacrifices to God.
 - In this way, they showed that they were looking to the blood of the covenant (the blood that Jesus would eventually shed) for the atonement of their sins and the sins of their family.
 - We have the tremendous example of Job, where, as a righteous man,
 - **Job 1:5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did regularly.**
- b. Besides this, with Abraham, we see what God expects of every man that He calls to be His own.
- The LORD even seems to make it the reason He called him:
 - In Gen 18:19, He says: **“For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”**
 - The Lord expects every man to take His holy word and to live by it himself and them to command his own family after him to live by it.
 - Men, this is your duty.
 - Read the promises to your family and command them to believe.
 - Read the commandments and command them to obey as Christ enables.
 - Pray with them that they would be able to receive the word.
 - Give thanks with them for the blessings of Christ.
 - Sing praises to our Lord.
 - The elders have called upon all of you married men to engage in daily family worship...
 - It is a duty that belongs to you as the head of your home.
 - We have prepared a directory for family worship to help you, and we will be very glad to help you with this duty.
- c. In 1 Corinthians 14:35, men are instructed to answer their wives’ questions when they get home.
- The responsibility belongs to you to oversee what they learn.
 - You want to see that they are both understanding and rejoicing in the truth.

TRANS> How can you, as the head of your household, claim to love your wife if you don’t take responsibility for her spiritual well-being?

- But that is not all that the LORD calls you to as the head of your wife.

B. The scriptures are clear that you are also to look after her physical well-being.

1. This falls under the whole category of nourishing and cherishing as well.

- You look after your own body—
 - When you are hungry you look for something to eat...
 - When you are injured, you seek relief.

- Do the same with them!
2. John and James both make it clear that if see our brother in need and do not provide, you do not love him.
 - Well how much more should a man take responsibility to provide for his own family!
 - In 1 Timothy 5, Paul speaks very strongly to men about this when he says these very strong words in 1 Tim 5:8:
 - **But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.**
 - This provision would include keeping the house and car safe,
 - Providing a home that is a comfortable place—a warm place—of course as you are able... but you accept the responsibility for this.
 - Some of you young men need to think of your future wife—and of preparing yourself to be able to provide for her.
 - Now is not the time to be loafing and playing games and going out on the town—it is time to prepare yourself for your calling so that you can provide.
 - I have seen young men who even saved up for a house before marriage so that they could have a place for their future wife—what a blessing to her.
 3. But here again, this is not to be done as one checking off an obligation...
 - You are to nourish and cherish them... you are to look for them to be truly warmed and filled... both spiritually and physically.

TRANS> And that leads me to a third thing...

- C. You are to look after your wife's general happiness. That is your responsibility too.
 1. To nourish and cherish her as a person—
 - to warm her with affection and encouragement in your embrace.
 - to comfort her in times of sorrows and to encourage her in times of discouragement.
 - to be there for her when she is perplexed or troubled about something.
 - to notice that and to ask her about it.
 2. Remember that marriage is a covenant of companionship.
 - That means that you are to be friends—intimate friends—who are comfortable to share your inmost secrets... who can fully trust each other.
 - It means that you need to spend time together, enjoying each other's company.
 - Often, that means that you have deliberately arrange your schedule so that you can spend time with each other... and maybe cut back on some things.
 - In our church, we have deliberately avoided a lot of mid-week activities to give you time to minister to your family.
 3. Men, as the head of your home, you are responsible to see that love is in your home.
 - You are to initiate it and when it is not there, you are to go to God and plead with him to show you what you need to do.
 - And one thing you are not to do is go blaming your wife or your children for the unhappiness and lack of love.

- No, you are to take responsibility for it and see what you need to change in your relationship with them and your leading of them
- If you see your wife or your children hardening, then examine yourself and see how you are contributing to that...
 - Take it up as your own concern in love for them.
 - Rest not until the problem is rectified.

III. Such is the beautiful love that is to be seen in a Christian husband.

- As those who have the Spirit of God and who know the love of Christ, we are to stand out in the world by the exercise of loving headship.
 - We are to see that we love our wives as we love ourselves.

A. Men, when your love to your wife exhibits the love of Christ, it will have a huge impact for the gospel.

1. Your wife and children will more easily learn of Christ's love because they will have it modeled to them by you—in the position where it is supposed to be seen.
 - And your children will want to grow up and have a home like yours.
 - They will have no interest in the anti-family sentiments that characterise our world.
2. It will cause unbelievers to take notice as well.
 - As more and more families fall apart and as men and women are unable to get along, our Christian marriages will point to Christ
 - People will see that our Saviour is real—whether they admit it or not.
3. And what an encouragement it will be to your brothers and sisters in the church!
 - It will show them the beauty of Christ's love, by you exhibiting that love!
 - You will bring glory to the Saviour by showing them His love for His people by your example of giving your life for your wife.
 - It will be an encouragement to them to live the way you, by God's grace, are living in your marriage.
 - You will be a model for them to follow.

B. But you will say to me, how can I do this?

1. Well let me say first off that you must want to do it.
 - One of the reasons we don't grow is because we don't want to bother with it.
 - You need to repent of your indifference to doing the will of God and of your lack of love.
2. But if you want to have this love in your marriage, the best thing you can do is look at Jesus' love—admire it—
 - Meditate on it until you get to the place that you want to show this love off in your marriage... that you cannot tolerate living as you have.
3. And then plead with the Lord to produce this love in you!
 - He wants you to have it—you can be sure of that—so He will hear you.
 - And let me add... if you are not married, there is nothing preventing you from showing this love in your own calling.

Conclusion: What a beautiful thing it is!