

Ephesians 5:25-33 "The Role of The Husbands"

Ephesians 5:25-33 ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. ²⁸ So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, ³⁰ because we are members of His body. ³¹ FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. ³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband.

Last week we spent the entire time looking at the role of the wife in a marriage relationship. It was not an exhaustive study, but it was a time where we hopefully saw the biblical perspective of what it means for a wife to submit to her husband.

By way of a quick recap let me just once again state what this sort of submission does not mean. It does not mean that wives are to be doormats. It does not mean that husbands are given permission to treat their wives as second class citizens or that they are to lord their authority over their wives.

God has made it clear that wives are to be helpmates in a marriage relationship because He knows we men need all the help we can get. In a nutshell, what all of this means is that God has established who will ultimately be responsible to the Lord in that marriage when it comes to the role of being the head in that relationship.

For this reason God has placed both the husband and the wife in their respective roles. This is not some man-made arrangement. And so when Paul says, "wives be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.", he is stating that wives have the privilege to work within the God-given confines of that relationship and that He does not expect them, under normal circumstances, to carry the responsibility which goes along with being the head in that family.

And so, we come this morning to the responsibilities of the husband in this relationship.

EPH 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."

What's interesting about this verse is what is not contained here. In light of the fact that the wives are commanded to submit to their husbands we might think that God would now command the men to rule well in that family."Husbands, rule your wives"....

But this is not what we find. Instead, husbands are commanded, not to rule over their wives, but to love their wives. The word love here in our text is the Greek word *agapao*. This is the word we refer to as agape which is associated with the same kind of love which God bestowed on us as He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for the penalty of our sins.

It's a self-sacrificing type of love which is spiritual in nature. In fact, in this same verse, in our text, Paul describes exactly what this love does when he says, "just as Christ loved *agapao* the church and gave himself up for her..."

Paul is making a direct correlation between the type of love Christ has for us and the type of love husbands are to give their wives. And this is what we want to explore. What type of love should husbands have for their wives and how does this love manifest itself in a practical way where it would naturally attract wives to then want to submit, even as the Church submits to her Savior?

To do this we need to look at the rest of our text and take note of what this love of Christ accomplished for the church. By the way, notice the imagery of the church being referred to as a woman.

This is not coincidental. All throughout the Scriptures God refers to Himself as the Bridegroom and His people as the bride whom He loves.

ISA 62:5 "As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you."

JER 2:2,32 "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. 32 Does a maiden forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding ornaments? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.

Jesus Christ refers to Himself as the Bridegroom in the gospel of Matthew.

MAT 9:14-5 Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 15 "Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast."

John the Baptist fully understood this concept of Christ being that bridegroom referred to in Isaiah and Jeremiah.

JOH 3:29-30 "The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. 30 He must become greater; I must become less."

The apostle John also records for us how God views His people when he says in REV 21:9 "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

The Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world is the Bridegroom and we are His bride. This imagery is to show us how intimate our Lord desires to know us and have fellowship with us. But it also shows the covenant relationship that our Lord has with us.

Jesus tells us that what God has joined together let no man separate. God has joined us to His Son through faith in His atoning sacrifice on our behalf. Unlike the human marriage where sin is still present and causes separation in many cases, the love our Lord has for His bride will not allow Him to let us go.

We're told that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. No one will be able to snatch us from the Father's hand. I like the way Jesus puts in the gospel of John.

JOH 6:39-40 "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Jesus Christ is the perfect example of what it means to be a husband to one's wife, to love that wife in a self-sacrificing way.

But there's more to this than simply the husband being willing to lay down his life for his wife. Let's look at our text.

EPH 5:25-27 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

There are several elements here which we need to note so that husbands can begin to appreciate their role in the marriage relationship, keeping in mind that this text also reveals how every believer, whether you're married or not, must be a bride to the bridegroom in a way where we love our bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

These three verses speak volumes of what Christ came into this world to do. As I mentioned a moment ago we might sometimes get the idea that the husband's role is to be willing to lay down his life for his wife. And that's usually put in the context of being a protector.

Now, it's true that husbands must fulfill this role but there is much more that Christ did than simply being a protector and deliverer. If we look at the life of Christ, keeping in mind who our Lord is, then we can begin to better appreciate what Paul is saying in our text.

The initial thing we notice about Jesus Christ is that He is first and foremost God in the flesh. He is very God and creator. He had no beginning and has no end. He is the Alpha and the Omega. And so the Son of God who became the Son of man is none other than the One who spoke all creation into existence.

This is what the writer of Hebrews makes quite plain in HEB 1:1-2 "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

And so for the Son of God, our Creator, to come into this world to assume humanity He had to humble Himself and become a servant. And this is the first thing we want to notice about our text and what Paul is trying to convey to husbands.

"Husbands loves your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." In other words, husbands become a servant to your wife as you love her. When Jesus first came into this world He did not come as a worldly Conqueror. Rather, His

first coming was that of a servant. His second coming will be that of a worldly Conqueror.

MAT 20:25-28 "Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Husbands, do you want to be like your Savior in this respect? Then serve your wife as unto the Lord. How do you do this? You provide for her needs. What are her needs? Well, some would suggest that it takes a life time to find this out, but her needs start with what Paul commands husbands to do. Love your wife.

Polls have been taken and wives have been interviewed over the years and one of the main things a woman looks for in a man is someone who will give them a sense of security, not necessarily in a materialistic way, but in an emotional way. They desire to know that they can depend on their husbands' love for them.

Husbands, do you know how important it is to not only tell your wife how much you love her every day, but to show her in the little things? Are you being a servant as it relates to how you help around the house? Are you being a servant when it comes to rearing your children? Are you being a servant when it comes to being sensitive to her emotional needs? Or did you enter into this marriage relationship to be served?

Some husbands would seem to give this impression, as they sit on their throne expecting their wives to wait on them hand and foot. It's almost as though they exist to give their wives an opportunity to be slaves.

This was not Christ's attitude. He did not come to be served but to be a servant. This is one of the things we notice about our text here in Ephesians, but there's something else which is vital to the way Christ came to be a servant and that has to do with being purposeful.

He not only gave Himself up for His bride, He came to sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing;..."

Christ not only came to redeem His bride and bring her into a personal relationship with Himself which was purpose enough, but He also came to sanctify her. The word sanctify, as it's used in the NAS and the KJV, can also be translated holy, which is the way the NIV puts it.

The Greek word is *hagiazo* and it carries with it the idea of being separated out from among something for a special purpose. God has called you and me to be separated from this world unto Himself so that we might reflect His love and demonstrate to this world that He is our God and Father, thus bringing Him glory.

When Paul uses this analogy with Christ sanctifying His church he means to show the husband that part of his role is to be a servant in a way that helps his wife become the godly woman she can become as he encourages her in her faith.

Husbands, to be a servant in this role we must be willing and able to be the spiritual leaders in that relationship, not relinquishing that role to your wife. Again, this doesn't mean we can't delegate aspects of this role to the wife, especially as it relates to the children, but ultimately we as husbands will stand before God and answer to Him as to whether or not we were the spiritual head.

This means getting involved with instructing in our families with the word of God and being that godly example for our wives and children. There's nothing more frustrating for a wife than to think she has to be the spiritual leader in the family because the husband isn't willing to do so. He must be willing to serve in this capacity realizing that this is his God-given responsibility to his family.

And as husbands begin to realize the privilege and responsibility given to them by God in this respect they can begin to approach this aspect of service to their family as more of a ministry. And as the saying goes, 'it's not just a job, it's an adventure.' An adventure of serving Christ as we serve our wives and family.

This is the purpose in being a servant of our Most High God in a marriage relationship. Just like Christ who came into this world to be a servant in giving Himself for the bride, so husbands must give themselves as servants.

We're all familiar with the verses found in EPH 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - 9 not by works, so that no one can boast."

Christ came to give us this gift but that's not the only reason He came. His purpose was to present to Himself a bride having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing. In other words, a bride who could shine for Christ.

This is why Paul went on to add in EPH 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

The husband's good work is to be a servant and to encourage his wife to love and good works; part of her good work involves her submission to her husband.

Some husbands wonder why their wives don't seem to want to submit. It may be that they're not loving them by being a servant to their wives, with the express purpose of helping them be the kind of Christian women, who want to submit to their husbands in such a way that it's not a burden, but a delight.

R.C. Sproul makes this observation. He says, "would a woman be afraid to submit herself to a man who loved her as much as Jesus loved the church? Would a woman fight and kick and scream against the leadership of a man who was willing to give his lifeblood to do anything he could to save her life?"

Agape love and being a servant, as well as being submissive, are all synonymous. To agape is to submit even as Christ submitted to the Father's will to come into this world to die for us. To agape is also to serve as Christ served by actually accomplishing the will of Father.

This is the way both husband and wife must approach their respective roles in a marriage relationship. Agape love must reign supreme as we consider one another as more important than ourselves.

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EPH 5:28-33 "In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must

love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

This is an interesting concept which Paul introduces here. The point he is making is that the husband will naturally love his own body. Paul does not mean to introduce some psychological theory of loving oneself before he can love others. His point is that everyone naturally wants to take care of his or her own body. We feed them, we clothe them, we protect them from cold and heat and generally help them grow and stay healthy.

And so, Paul is simply stating the obvious, that the husband spends a lifetime taking care of his own body, so the husband ought to love his own wife as his own body, nurturing, protecting, feeding, clothing and generally helping the wife grow in all aspects, including the spiritual. In fact, Paul thinks it absurd for a husband to do anything less if he truly loves and desires to be a servant to his wife.

EPH 5:29-30 "After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - 30 for we are members of his body."

Again, Paul is talking in general terms and not trying to raise other issues like women or men who can't stand the way they look. Rather, his point is to show how Christ loves His body, that is the body of Christ, and would never do anything to hurt her or keep her from being able to grow and mature.

He gave Himself up for her and has served her in a way to redeem her and bring her back into an eternal relationship. And Paul wants our relationship to our wives to be similar so that we would never do anything to hamper that relationship. But just as we love our own bodies we would love our own wives as we nurture them, care for them and serve them.

This, by the way, should be a real encouragement to all of us who have placed our faith in Christ because Jesus is telling us here that He cherishes us as His bride because we are members of His body. This is not like membership in some club. The idea here of being a member is similar to that of being a member of the human body, like a limb. We are attached like an arm or a hand which cannot be separated. We are inseparable members of His body.

Because we are attached to His body in this way Paul makes the analogy that we are attached to our wives spiritually, and in some ways physically, to where we become one with them.

EPH 5:31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."
(Gen. 2:24)

A marriage relationship is a severing of one type of relationship to form an entirely new relationship which is not like the former. To leave father and mother is to leave the parent-child relationship and form a new union with another person, in this case a woman who becomes a wife where the two become one flesh.

It speaks of a relationship that is so close that it can be referred to as being one. Does this mean that each person loses his or her identity as an individual? No. But it does refer to an intimate relationship which is reserved only for that couple.

This is where Paul brings in an aspect of marriage that we sometimes lose sight of. You see, marriage is patterned after a relationship God had foreordained from all of eternity. That relationship is where the church is intimately united to Christ.

Your marriage and my marriage is to be a reflection of the relationship Christ has with us and what it cost Him. But it is also to be a reflection of how that relationship is meant to be indissoluble. Christ will never forsake us and we must never forsake one another in our marriage relationships.

Now, I know that in a perfect world this would be the case. But we're not living in a perfect world and none of us are perfect. The intent of Paul's thought here is not to delve into the matter of divorce, but he certainly implies how a healthy God-centered relationship works, and how that relationship flourishes after the pattern of Christ being the head and bridegroom of the church.

This is why he says in EPH 5:32-33 "This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Paul is saying here that if we are a true bride of Christ we can be assured that our bridegroom will bring us home to be with Himself, because we are united to Him in a spiritual union which God has brought together and no man can separate.

This is a great mystery, but a great blessing to know that our Lord and Savior has loved us even unto death on a cross. Some individuals in a marriage relationship won't be the first one's to love or submit as they wait for the other one to take the first step. The attitude is sometimes, "I'll love her when she begins to submit', or I'll submit to him when he begins to love me.'

Don't ever forget the mystery of this relationship we have with Christ which Paul describes in the letter to the Romans.

ROM 5:8-11 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

We are not to wait for the other person to become lovely before we start loving and serving them. Even as Christ loved us, while we were still sinners, we must love each other and especially our wives and husbands despite the sin which we still possess. But as each is loving and being a servant, agape love will reign supreme and the home will become a picture of the relationship Christ has with His bride.

In this way Christ is glorified. But, so as not to forget what our roles are in a marriage, Paul repeats it one more time in verse 33.

EPH 5:33 "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Husbands and wives fulfill your ministries to each other. Those who are not married fulfill your ministries to Christ and the church as each one has been gifted and as each one realizes and appreciates this intimate relationship we have with our bridegroom.

See yourself as a bride of the Lamb and be a faithful bride never bringing dishonor to the One who loved us with an everlasting love and who came to us inviting us to partake of His infinite love and security and fellowship.

As a man leaves his mother and father and clings to his wife, may all of us leave the attachment to this world and cleave to and love

our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who will present us to Himself clean by His shed blood.