

The Husband's Role – Part 1

Ephesians 5:25-33

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We've learned that marriage is a divine institution. We've been going through the book of Genesis. We looked at the institution of marriage. Marriage is a divine institution, and it is the first institution that God has ever ordained. The other institutions of government and of the church are related to marriage. You know, as goes marriage, goes the nation; and the church as well, divine institution, needs marriage and marriage needs the church. The church is not in competition with marriage and family. Marriage and family need the church, and the church needs marriage and family. I really urge you that if you're a married couple raising children, even if you're not, every Christian should build their life around a healthy Bible-centered, Christ-exalting church. One of the best things you can do for your marriage, for your family, for the nation, the community is to be a part of a church that's Bible-centered, Christ-exalting, teaching the Word of God, and that you build your family around the church and the church builds your family, and you bless and build the church. They both work together.

Marriage is the divine institution that God has ordained that the wife have her duties or roles (I like the word "duties," we don't hear much about duties anymore) and that the husband has his duties or role or responsibility. Not to fully review, but since we've been away for several weeks, the wife is to do three things, we summarized it, love her husband, Titus 2:4. Sometimes we hear, "Husbands, love your wives; wives submit to your husbands," but the Bible actually says that wives are to love their husbands as well. Wives are also to submit to their husbands, Ephesians 5:22, it's a part of our text, and then respect your husbands, Ephesians 5:33.

The husband has a role as well. We're going to see three things. I want you to note them, and then we're going to go back and look at the first. The husband's duty toward his wife is: 1) to love her sincerely, 2) to dwell with her understandingly, 3) he is to honor her highly. Again, these three are kind of just a fly over of the main responsibility of a husband—love your wife sincerely, dwell with her understandingly, and honor her highly.

Tonight we're only going to look at the first one. We took one week for the wives, we're going to take two weeks for the men. We've gotta give them double barrel. We need it. Men need all the help they can get. We're going to look at that one area of the husband's role or duty, husbands love your wives sincerely. Let's read the text, Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it,"—that is, the church—"That he might sanctify and cleanse it,"—that is, the church—"with the washing of water by the word, 27 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. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great

mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular,”—Paul summarizes—“so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence,”—respects—“her husband.” My King James Bible has “reverence,” it speaks of a respect your husbands. Wives, love your husband, submit to your husband, and respect your husband.

How amazing it must have been for the recipients of this letter to the Ephesians when Paul wrote to them (by the way, Paul’s writing in prison in Rome), they heard the words, “Husbands, love your wives,” and the reason why it would have been so amazing to them is because (I’m going to mention it and then develop it) he gave a very specific word for love that he used in the Greek language. He used the word *agape*, which is the divine, spiritual, sacrificial, self-denying, giving love. It was the highest form of love that we could ever imagine. It was actually coined by Christians and popularized by Christianity because the Bible used it, John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” For God so *agapao* the world, and the reason being that in the culture at that time women were not very highly valued. In the Hebrew culture they were to some degree, but in the Greco-Roman culture women were not very highly valued.

Anyone who says that Christianity subjects and pushes women down, doesn’t know history, doesn’t know reality. Liberation of women is owed to Christianity. I think of Christ who stopped at Jacob’s well and talked to the woman of Samaria, which a Jew, even at that time, would not talk to a woman in public. He said, “Give me a drink,” and she said, “Why would you, a Jew, ask a woman of Samaria for a drink?” Jesus began to dialogue with her. We know the discussion that took place in John 4, how Jesus actually brought her to a saving knowledge of Himself and He reached out to that woman. They brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught in adultery. Now, under Mosaic Law, they would actually stone that woman, “Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned,” but Jesus said, “...hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said...Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” Jesus elevates women to her rightful place, so the marvelous Word of God here, telling the husbands to love their wives.

Three times in the text Paul uses the word “*agape*,” verse 25, “Husbands, love your wives;” verse 28, “So ought men to love their wives;” and again, verse 33, “...so love his wife even as himself.” Three times he uses the word “*agape*,” so he’s really trying to drive that home. If I were to summarize in one word the wife’s role, it would be submission; one word, the husband’s role, would be to love. You’re not just submitting to some tyrant, you’re submitting to the person God has ordained as your head, your protector, your provider, your lover; and in that love, you find security and you are then able to submit.

Now, the word “*agape*” is interesting because they had another word they could’ve used, the word *phileo*, which is a friendship love where we get our word “Philadelphia” or brotherly love. He could’ve used the word *érōs*, which is where we get our word erotic from, which is a sexual love or desire. He could’ve used the word *storgē*, which is a family love, but no he used the word *agape*, which is a giving, sacrificial, self-denying love.

We use the word “love” in the English language for all kinds of things. This is why we don’t really know what love is because we don’t have multiple words in our language for love, we just use the word “love”—I love my wife, and I love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Obviously, my love for my wife is a lot different than my love for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I do love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, I eat about one a year. But it’s funny, every time I mention that, someone will bring me peanut butter and jelly on a Sunday; so I don’t need any peanut butter and jelly, thank you very much. This is a word that was actually popularized by Christianity—the subject of agape love for a husband for his wife.

I want you to turn real quickly to 1 Corinthians 13. I don’t normally go to other verses, but I wanted you to just see it real quickly, and then I’m going to break it down in the New Living Translation. What is agape love? Husbands are to love their wives, and they’re to love them sincerely. By the way, there’s going to be five aspects of this love, but how are they to love them? Look at 1 Corinthians 13:4. Paul says, “Charity,”—love—“suffereth long, and is kind; charity,”—love—“envieth not; charity,”—love—“vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.” I’m reading from the King James translation which has “charity,” but again, it’s the word agape.

Verse 5, “Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked,” — which, by the way, in the Greek is actually not provoked. You talk about radical! Agape love is not provoked. “...thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 Charity,”—love—“never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.”

Let me break it down for you in the New Living Translation. By the way, I don’t know how fast your pen is, I want to give you 14 qualities from verses 4-8 of a husband’s love for his wife. In verse 4 we have, “Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud,” so you could just take those points and chew on them for a while as a husband and see it as a target goal for your love for your wife—patient, kind, not jealous, not boastful or proud. Then, look at verse 5, love is not rude, that’s a good one. “It does not demand its own way,”—ladies, you should highlight that in your Bible and remind your husband of that. We also see in verse 5 that love “...is not irritable,” that’s a real convicting point. Again, verse 5, “and it keeps no record of being wronged.” It doesn’t keep a little black book where when things get stressful, read all the things that your wife has done wrong in the past two weeks, past two months, or the past year. “Remember eight years ago when you coughed and you spit on me? You never apologized for that.” You have it in your “book,” with the date and time and place all written down. You just hold these grudges.

Notice in verse 6, “It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.” Look at verse 7, “Love never gives up,” I love that, in light of how people just want to get a divorce or bail out of their marriage. If you really agape your wife, you’re not going to give up on your marriage. If you agape your wife, you will not give up on your marriage. “...never loses faith, is always hopeful,” verse 7, “and endures through every circumstance.” These are the translations from the New Living Translation.

In verse 8 it says, “But love will last forever!” You got that? If you get a chance, I guess I could’ve just simply said, “Get a New Living Translation and read it.” Ladies, if your husband doesn’t do that, get him a New Living Translation, highlight, put a marker in that spot of the Bible, and let them just read it and meditate on it.

Go back with me to our text in Ephesians 5. A reminder, by the way, too, that love is the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22, “But the fruit of the Spirit is,”—what’s the first on the list?—“love.” It’s the word agape. Remember in Ephesians 5:18, “...but be filled with the Spirit,” that you allow the Spirit to fill you, control you, and be able to have that love you need for your wife. You cannot agape your wife without the Holy Spirit’s help. You cannot have genuine, authentic agape love without the Holy Spirit’s help in this endeavor. Men, make sure you’re born again, as I’ve emphasized through this series, make sure you’re Spirit-filled, make sure you’re grounded and growing in the Word of God and allow God’s love to flow through you.

Now, I want to break it down. How is a husband to love his wife? Five ways from our text, and the points will be on the screen, but I want you to see them in your Bibles as well. First of all, to agape your wife, you love her unconditionally. Look at verse 25, “Husbands, love your wives,” by the way also, husbands and wives are male and female. Amen? For reference to that, look at Matthew 19:4-5 quoting Genesis 1:27 where Jesus quotes Genesis and says that God, “...made them male and female,” so the husband is a male (we don’t know what males are in our world today, it’s interesting the attack on masculinity), a wife is the female, and marriage is between male and female, one man, one woman. Jesus and the book of Genesis make it very, very clear. Notice you are to “...love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.” How did Jesus love the church? The answer, unconditionally. He loved us when we were yet sinners, right? He saves us by His grace, so there’s no conditions. God created marriage to illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church.

I believe in the sanctity of marriage. It is the divine institution and reflects the relationship between Christ and the church, and the two becoming one also is a reflection of the unity within the Godhead—one God, three Persons, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You can’t change marriage. You can’t redefine marriage. You can’t make it what you want it to be, it’s divinely designed by God in His Word. Christ’s love for the church is unconditional—He loved us when we were undeserving and unworthy. None of us are worthy of God’s love, so for a husband to put stipulations on his wife, “Well, if you do this, and you do that, and you do this, you can still cook food that I like and you clean the house right, and you look great,” and all that stuff. “If you meet this standard or bar, then I’m going to love you; but if you nag or bug me or something like that, I won’t love you anymore.”

Agape love does not change when the object loved changes, and agape love has no expectations of reciprocation from the object loved. Agape love seeks the highest good of the object loved, so it’s unconditional love. Husbands, are you loving your wives unconditionally with no strings attached? Husbands, if you want your marriage to grow strong, love your wife unconditionally. You don’t want your children to grow up walking away from God, you want them to see an example of God’s sacrificial, self-denying, giving love in your marriage relationship.

It's a very, very important facet of your marriage. Love does not change when it sees change or alterations, "I used to love you." I can't tell you how many times people say, "Well, I don't love her anymore; I don't love him anymore." Well, you never did really love them then if you don't love them anymore because love does not fail. Love endures. Love does not give up. Love doesn't change or alter, it's unconditional.

Here's the second way you agape your wife, sacrificially. That's also in verse 25. Notice it says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and,"—what?—"gave himself for it." You're going to find quite a few references to the church in this passage on marriage in the section of the husband's role. I think that's fascinating. Paul grounds his teaching on marriage in his teaching on the church and the picture of the church. The church is mentioned in verses 25, 27, 29, and 32. This whole passage is all about the *ekklesia* the called out assembly, the bride and the body of Christ.

You're not going to really understand marriage if you don't understand the church and Christ's sacrificial, unconditional love for the church. Christ is our example of unconditional, sacrificial love for the church. Jesus came from heaven. Jesus was actually a Man, walked in humility, suffered, died willingly, voluntarily on the cross, was buried, rose from the dead, and lives for us. But just as we looked at Philippians a few weeks ago and saw the kenosis passage where Christ, "...being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," not something to hold onto, but emptied Himself, "...and took upon him the form of a servant," that's the sacrificial picture that a husband should have in love for his wife, being willing to give of himself for his wife. It's so very important.

A husband's willing to die many times for his wife, but many times he doesn't want to go do the dishes for his wife. He's willing to give his life to protect his wife, but he won't go shopping with his wife. I know that's hard, guys. If you're going in the mall and you see the sign, "Abandon all hope who enter here," when you're thinking, Let's just get what we need and get outta here. Let's go. Let's go. Then you hear those horrible words, your wife says, "I just want to look around." O God! Why hast Thou forsaken me! What does that mean, "...look around?" It's the right size, it's the right color, it's the right price, let's get it. Let's boogie. Let's go. "I just want to look around." O Lord have mercy. You talk about sacrificing for your wife, but it can be a great time just to talk, be together, and just spend time together.

The novel concept of, "I'll go shopping with you," or "I'll go to the store," a lot of women don't want their husbands to go shopping with them—they want to leave their husbands behind, they want some peace and quiet. But to be able to just sacrificially give up your plans—to give of yourself, to die to yourself—and to sacrificially serve your wife; to give up watching Game 5 of the World Series, watching football, doing what you want, to say, "I'll give myself to my wife." Coming home from work and saying, "I'll give the kids baths and read Bible stories. I'll put them to bed. I'll help clean up the kitchen," or whatever it might be, you're sacrificing for your wife. That's what agape love does.

Here's the third, write it down, we're to love our wives unconditionally, sacrificially, and thirdly,

sanctifyingly. I don't know if that's really even a word or not, but I made it up. Sanctify is a word, sanctifyingly just so it kind of sounds great for my sermon points. You're to love your wife, you're to love her sanctifyingly. Look at verses 26-27. He's talking about the church in verse 25, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. 27 That he might present it,"—the church—"to himself a glorious church,"—by the way, this is because of our position in righteousness in Christ, how the church will be presented to Christ and to God the Father—"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." We are to love our wives sanctifyingly.

The husband is to love his wife in a way that has a spiritually sanctifying effect and development on his wife's love for the Lord. So, ask yourself, "Is my wife spiritual because of me or in spite of me?" We all know that commonly, many times, the wife is the one that says, "Let's go to church." The wife is the one that says, "Let's pray together." The wife is the one that says, "Let's read the Bible. Let's put God first in our lives." Shame on us men for that. Man up! It takes courage and manhood and bravery to say, "...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

There is no substitute for a father figure in the home to lead in things of the Lord, to lead in taking the family to church. I personally believe that the husband should be the one who leads the family to church, that he picks a church, again, that's doctrinally sound and biblically accurate, a healthy church for his wife and for his children, and that he's discerning and actually protects his wife doctrinally, theologically, and biblically. He watches over her and prays with her and reads with her as a shepherd. You're a pastor of your own little congregation, so you have to be a man of the Word. I'm convinced that a lot of men are actually derelict in their responsibility of reading their own Bibles and being doctrinally knowledgeable to be able to shepherd their wives, to be able to pastor their wives, to be able to oversee their wives. A wife should be able to feel secure in the husband's love. Not that he has to dictate everything that you have to believe, but that he should be there to talk to and pray with and keep the direction of the family going toward the Lord, and that you should be sanctifying your wife in such a way that she's becoming more like Christ.

It's done through your own walk with God, through your prayer life, praying together with your wife and your children, for the knowledge of the Word that you have, imparting it to your wife and to your family, and for your participation in the Lord's church and fellowship with other believers; again, building your family around the church. Your love should have a sanctifying effect upon your wife. Your number one goal and desire for your wife should be that she's a woman that fears the Lord. Shame on men when they just want their wives to go make money (that's fine, if that's necessary) or to do other things that aren't a priority of Christ in their lives. You should do everything you can so your wife is in fellowship, she has even other women that are godly influences in her life, encouraging her to be in women's Bible study, encouraging her to be involved in ministry, encouraging her in the things of the Lord, never hindering her with your own carnal demands but being spiritual enough to direct the family in the things of the Lord. So, love her sanctifyingly as Christ loved the church. It's so very important that we might have a wife that is holy and, verse 27, "...without blemish," like the church is before Christ.

Here's the fourth, love your wife affectionately. We could spend probably a week on each one of these points, but notice verses 28-30, "So ought men to love their wives," it's almost like he's headed toward the summary in verses 32-33. He wants them to understand, this is my conclusion, "So ought men to love,"—or agape—"their wives," and he gives two analogies, "...as their own bodies." In verse 27, he first used the picture as between Christ and the church, which is the bride of Christ. So, as the church is the bride of Christ, you husbands also have a bride. Then, you also see that the church is the body of Christ, verses 28-30. He says, "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but,"—I love this statement—"nourisheth and cherisheth it,"—that is, his own body—"even as the Lord the church."

The words "nourish" and "cherish" means literally to warm with body heat, so it has the idea of showing affection. I know the idea as a man should be macho and masculine, but again, there's nothing unmasculine about a man being affectionate toward his wife. It speaks of a warming with body heat, that she should be valued, appreciated, loved affectionately. She should be held, she should be hugged, she should be told that she's loved and valued, and you should show her your affection. She's your own body, verse 28. Let's look at that again for a second, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."

Years ago there was a book for husbands and marriage that was titled, Do Yourself a Favor: Love Your Wife. If you wanted to go searching for it, it's still out there. I've been around so long now that a lot of books I read and know about went out of print 35-40 years ago. It's called, Do yourself a Favor: Love Your Wife. It's a great book on marriage for men. And, you take care of yourself. When I get tired, do you know what I do? I put myself to bed. When I get hungry, I feed myself...peanut butter and jelly. When I'm thirsty, I give myself something to drink. I take care of myself. My wife and I are one. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it," so as you care for yourself, care for your wife. If you care for yourself, care for her. Do yourself a favor, love your wife. Nothing more detrimental than being unloving toward your wife. You're one! You're one person, "...and they two shall be one flesh."

So, the church is the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, so the husband should also show affection toward his wife with words, and words can really damage a marriage relationship, "...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Ask God to put a protection over your words. One of the most common things I see and hear about in marriage, and I know it's hard and a challenge, is wives that are being verbally abused by their husbands. It could be that he loves his wife but lets his guard down and just derides or criticizes her, verbally abuses her, and doesn't realize that he's doing it to his own body and to that precious bride that God has entrusted to him.

She's also a sister in the Lord, and we get that in our next session together when we look at 1 Peter. He talked about dwelling with your wife. It means settle down and be at home with your wife, understanding your wife, doing it in an understanding way, "...that our prayers be not hindered." You can't be wrong with your wife and right with God. In order to be right with God,

you have to be right with your wife. You can't be out of fellowship with God and in fellowship with your wife. It doesn't work that way. You have to be in both.

So, you show her affection by your words, your actions, and by your communication with her. I heard of a midwestern farmer and his wife. They went to bed one night, and a tornado hit their house, ripped the roof off, sucked him and her and their bed right out of the house. They were swirling in this tornado, and the wife started to cry, "Ahhhh!" The farmer said to his wife, "Well, this is no time to be crying, no time to be upset." She said, "I'm just so happy. It's the first time we've been out alone for fifty years." Another way that you can show affection to your wife is to take her out. Take her to the restaurant, not just to the drive thru, go inside. Show her affection and love.

Here's the last, but not least, the fifth, love her unconditionally, love her sacrificially, love her sanctifyingly, love her affectionately, and because remember you're one flesh, verse 30, but then love her exclusively. Verse 31, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother,"—exclusively—"and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." Underline the word "leave," "joined," and "one flesh." This is that foundational passage from Genesis 2:24, which is Moses' commentary on the Genesis narrative of how God made them male and female and brought the two together, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." So, leaving, cleaving it says in Genesis, and joined here in Ephesians. It means to be glued together, a permanent bond, and then oneness or intimacy, "...one flesh." This is such a foundational text, but the point I want to make is, you, "...leave father and mother."

It's interesting that when that verse is used in Genesis, Adam and Eve had no father and mother, so it's not for them, it's for us and for generations to come. You should never, ever, ever, ever let your parents interfere in your marriage relationship. You should never let your parents come between you and your spouse or make your parents a priority over your husband or over your wife; never make your children a priority over your wife; and, men, never make a priority over your friends, your sports, your hobbies, your job or your occupation, over your wife. And, never, ever, ever, ever allow another woman to take the place of your wife in your heart, in your affections, in your love, and in your life. It is to be exclusive love. The husband and wife relationship is the closest bond on earth. You leave your parents, you cleave to your wife, and you're glued together and become one flesh.

Speaking to men tonight, I guess I would just emphasize the importance...In the New Testament there is a qualification for pastors in Timothy, and do you know what that qualification is? "...the husband of one wife." That's how it reads in the English Bible, "...the husband of one wife." Do you know how it reads in the Greek? A one-woman man. That's exactly how it would be translated, a one-woman man. It means you're married to a wife and no other women captivate your love, your affection, your attention, your focus. There's one woman. You have eyes for only one woman, so that would mean that you don't view pornography, you don't flirt, you don't become close, intimate friends with other women other than your wife. You don't text with them, you don't call them, you don't hang out with them. I've heard some of the most

bizarre, crazy, insane stories in pastoring for over 51 years now that you can imagine. I've seen even good, godly men crash and burn because they've become too friendly with another woman or too affectionate toward another woman. It's a very dangerous thing. Never let another woman captivate your love. Your love for your wife is to be exclusive.

We're going to do a whole night on divorce. I don't want to do it, I don't like to do it, but I think it needs to be taught on what the Bible says about it. We're going to do a whole night on intimacy in marriage, which is so important, but you know there's only one person that can satisfy or meet your sexual needs and that's your spouse—your wife or your husband. Read 1 Corinthians 7, "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband," your conjugal rights, and there's only one human being that walks planet earth that can meet your sexual needs, your emotional needs, your needs in other areas, and that's your spouse.

There's no way that a husband or a wife can ever meet all the needs and the longings of anyone's heart, so don't put expectations on your husband or on your wife that were never intended to be there by God. Only God can meet the deepest needs of your life, but you should be devoted to only one woman exclusively, and that's why he says, "...and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." Jesus, in light of that verse, said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." When we get to divorce, we'll look at Matthew 19 on Christ's words for that.

Guys, guard yourself. Guard yourself. Guard your eyes. Guard your time, your relationships. Be the husband of one wife. Be the one-woman man. Be focused on only one woman.

A woman by the name of Catherine Marshall wrote a book called, *To Live Again*. She made this statement, "Every human being needs love. Most of our troubles spring from the lack of it. Like thirsty men in a desert, we perish without it."

Husbands, love your wives. Amen? Let's pray.