

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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Ephesians 5:25-33 “The Husband of a Happy Wife”

Intro. I believe that marriages should last for a lifetime, and get better and better every year. We should find significant personal fulfillment in our marriages. But so often, marriage falls short of meeting expectations. And I believe there are several reasons for that. One is that the marriage relationship was complicated by the curse associated with the fall of Man into sin. The curse announced by God in Genesis stated that there would be conflicting desires, with the woman wanting to rule over the man, and the man usually having the power to rule over the woman, as history has demonstrated. Man would be forced to work long, hard hours to make a living. Working long hours will put stress on any marriage.

And then Satan has always been attacking the home. He knows that if he can destroy our homes, he can do much spiritual damage to the next generation. And so he has been offering men and women alternatives to God’s original plan such as cohabitation, adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, incest, and so forth.

And society has corrupt teachings about the home and the marriage relationship. Such teaching of the so-called experts is constantly changing and adapting. And it keeps changing because nothing that they suggest ever works for long.

And what really makes the marriage relationship difficult is the basic self-centered nature of man. It’s difficult to maintain a good, lasting relationship with a person when you are selfish instead of loving.

So as you can see, a lasting, good marriage is not going to just happen. There is too much working against it. And so you have to work on your marriage relationship. A lasting, good marriage does not depend simply upon finding Mr. or Mrs. Right, but by *being* Mr. or Mrs. Right by living right according to God’s teaching on marriage & the home.

This morning I want to talk mainly with the husbands and future husbands that are here today. I want to talk with you about the greatest thing you can do to make your relationship with your wife a lasting and joyful relationship. In fact, I want to tell you how to have a happy wife! Paul has much more to say in this passage to the men than he does to the ladies. That is because the husband is the key to a good home life. If you do your part, your wife will usually respond in a positive way, and you will most likely have a good marriage.

So husbands, what is your responsibility in the marriage relationship? First of all:

I. YOU SHOULD OBEY THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMAND FOR HUSBANDS

Pastor Ed Young was speaking to a 32-year old single woman. He started talking to her about her hopes regarding marriage. Then he asked, “What are some of the characteristics you’d like to find in this person who will be your mate?” Her first answer was, “I want someone who loves me.” [Young, 10]. So we should not be surprised that the most important command given to husbands is found in v.25, “Husbands, love your wives.” This is a command. To fail here is not only a sin against your wife, it is a sin against God. I would also point out that in v.33 Paul makes sure that this command to love applies to each and every husband. He says, “Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself...” No one is exempt, regardless of who

you are married to. Both husband and wife are commanded to love each other, but it should be pointed out that while the wife is commanded to love her husband (*philadros*) once in the New Testament (Tit. 2:4), the husband is commanded to love his wife at least 3 times here in this passage, as well as one more time in Col. 3:19. Perhaps one reason that men need this command more than women do is because women seem to have a greater natural inclination to love.

But besides that, why would Paul make this command the most important command for husbands to follow?

A. Love is Her Most Basic Personal Need – Christian psychologists tell us that the two most important psychological needs we all have is to be secure in knowing that we are loved, and to have a sense of significance, to feel our lives are worthwhile. Which of the two is most important to the average woman? It is to be loved. Now we all know that historically, men have been the main providers for the home. Most husbands acknowledge that they should provide for the physical needs of their wives and children. And too many husbands seem to think that to make a woman happy, all you need to do is give her things like diamonds, a nice house, nice clothes, and so forth. Yet some men, who are good providers, are surprised to find out that their wives are not satisfied with materialism. The reason is we are not animals. We are not machines. We are persons. And we not only have physical needs, but we also have personal needs. And the greatest personal need of a woman is the security of being loved. And so men, nice possessions should not substitute for your love, not for your wife, nor for your children.

There is another reason you should focus your attention on loving your wife:

B. Love is the Fulfillment of all Relationship Laws - Gal. 5:13b-14 says that love is the fulfillment of the law. Love will cause you to refrain from saying or doing anything that will hurt your wife. Love will cause you to do positive good toward your wife. Husbands, you may not need to go and buy some book on marriage, if you would just follow this commandment concerning love.

Next, I want to talk to you about:

II. HOW WE OBEY THIS IMPORTANT COMMAND

Husbands, the first thing you need to do is:

A. Understand the Meaning of Love - When Paul uses the word “love,” he is not talking about sexual love (*eros*), though there is a place for that in marriage. He is not talking about friendship love (*philos*), though you should love as friends. Rather, he uses an uncommon word which became common in the New Testament. He uses the Greek word *agape* in its verb form (*agapao*). Now to understand this kind of love, we first need to understand what it is not. We often confuse physical attraction, infatuation, lust, and personal desire with love. For example, a person may say, “I love pizza.” This kind of love has nothing to do with caring and devotion and giving. What we mean is, “I like the good feeling I get and the satisfaction I get when I eat pizza.” That is about the level of love most people seem to have when they get married. It goes something like this, “I love the feeling I get when I am around Sam.” This kind of love is really a self-centered kind of love. That is certainly not the kind of love that Paul has in mind here.

So what is *agape* love?

1. It is a love that is unselfish, that seeks not its own. That is one characteristic of love given by Paul in 1 Cor. 13:5. This kind of love is thoughtful and considerate. Such love gives and sacrifices.

2. It is unconditional. *Agape* love does not depend upon the loveliness or performance of the person loved. This is the Greek word that is used of God's love for us. Rom. 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Therefore, it is not an emotion that requires that your wife always deserve your love. Now wives do enjoy it when their husbands are head over heels in love with them because of their character, appearance, personality, and accomplishments. But they also need the security of knowing that their husbands will love them even when they mess up, or aren't looking great, or when they are in a bad mood.

3. Finally, this kind of love seeks to meet the needs of the person that we are showing love to. That doesn't mean fulfilling her every desire, but it certainly does mean fulfilling her needs. I have already stated that one of her greatest needs is to *feel* loved. This involves telling her that you love her with words, hugs, gifts, etc. Husbands, you show your love by spending time with you wife and doing things together, and talking with each other. Show your love by giving her focused attention.

So in order to obey this command to love, you need to understand what kind of love you are commanded to give your wife. I hope you have a better understanding of the goal you are seeking to attain. But what I've shared with you is still a bit abstract. So Paul gives an illustration of the kind of love you are to have for your wife. So the next thing you need to do is:

B. Love Your Wife as Christ Loved the Church – In v.25 Paul said, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church..." The love of Christ for the Church is the pattern we are to follow in expressing love for our wives. Obviously, we cannot love our wives as much as Christ loved the Church, but we can love our wives with the same *kind* of love. In other words, we may not have the ocean, but we can have little of it in our bucket. So what kind of love did Christ have for us, His Church? He teaches us to have:

1. Sacrificial, Giving Love – Notice in the last of v.25 that Christ so loved the Church that He "gave Himself for her." Christ loved us enough to leave heaven, to come to earth, to take on a human form, to be spit on and mocked, to be abused, to be crowned with a crown of thorns, to be nailed to a cross, and to have a spear thrust into His side. No sacrifice was too great for Christ to make on behalf of His bride, the Church. And the fact that His love is seen primarily in His sacrificial death for our salvation is seen in the tense of the verb here. Note that Paul did not say, "as Christ *loves* the church," but "as Christ *loved* the church." He is just using the past tense because he is thinking about the past great act of love: His sacrificial death.

So we should follow the example of Christ and love our wives sacrificially. Do you have this kind of love for your wife? When is the last time you made a sacrifice for your wife? Do you work hard to provide for your wife? Do you ever sacrifice your time? Occasionally giving up a game of golf to go shopping with your wife is a sacrifice! Would you be willing to die for your wife?

Furthermore, Christ teaches us to have a:

2. Purifying Love – In v.26 we read, "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." Christ loved the Church so much; He wanted to cleanse us and purify us. Sin was condemning us and destroying us, and so for our good He came to save us from

sin by forgiving us in bearing our sins upon the cross. That was our greatest need. He is also in the process of cleansing sin from our lives.

Now how does this relate to the kind of love you should have for your spouse? You see, love seeks the well-being of the object of our love. Men, if you love a woman, you will do everything in your power to maintain her holiness, her virtue, her righteousness, and her purity. In fact, v.27 says that Christ wanted us to “be holy and without blemish.” You will not lead her to sin, or into a situation where she would likely sin. And positively, you would help her to become more Christ-like.

The last of v.26 implies the means of helping your wife spiritually, and that’s by the Word of God. Husband, you need to learn the Word of God; share the Word of God with your wife, and live out the teachings of the Word of God as an example to her. You should want your wife to come to church and hear the Word of God.

There is one other characteristic of the love of Christ for us, the Church. It is:

3. A Communicating Love – This is not specifically stated in this text, but Christ clearly communicated His love for us. Paul does say here that He demonstrated His love for us by sacrifice. Jesus also communicated His love by His words. For example, He said in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you....”

So tell your wife that you love her, and do it often. One husband contributed the following true story to *Reader’s Digest*: “One day I walked up behind my wife of 19 years and whispered into her ear, ‘I love you.’” Without saying a word, she went over and marked it on the calendar.”¹ Men, we need to say it more than once in a great while!

C. Love Your Wife as Your Own Body – In v.28 Paul says, “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies....” Likewise, Paul says in v.33, “Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself.” Such self-love is not wrong. It is the natural law of life. One point that Paul is making is that you should love your wife at least as much as yourself. You should love your wife as you love your own body.

Paul is not just giving a pattern of love to follow. He’s not simply saying that we should love our wives as we love ourselves. Rather, Paul also says that we are to love our wives because they *are* a part of us. He says in the last of v.28, “he who loves his wife loves himself.” Why is that? Well in v.31 he quotes from Genesis 2:24, which says that in marriage, “the two shall become one flesh.” A man should love his wife because she *is* part of his body. Husband, your wife is one with you. She is an extension of your own body in a real sense. The same thing is true spiritually in the relationship between the Church and Christ. Paul says in v.30, “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” That echoes Gen. 2:23.

What does this mean? We spend a lot of time on our bodies. Some of you jog & exercise to keep your body in good shape. I hope you are eating the right kind of foods. You keep your body warm in winter, and cool in summer. Furthermore, you protect your bodies from harm, don’t you? When your body has needs, you do whatever it takes to meet those needs. Even so, you need to meet the needs of your wife. Furthermore, a man may have a body which does not altogether suit him. He may wish it were handsomer, healthier, stronger, or more active. He may wish that his head had more hair! Still it is his body, and he will take care of it at least to some degree. Even so, we are to love our wives unconditionally.

So if this fact has been grasped, that the wife is part of the husband’s body, then the husband will indeed love his wife. To not do so is to bring harm on ourselves. Destroying your

¹ Contributed to *Reader’s Digest* by Steven J. Orendorff.

marriage is destroying part of yourself. Men, if you abuse your body, and fail to meet the needs of your body, the quality of your life will be affected. And if you fail to meet the needs of your wife, the quality of your life will certainly be affected. As they always say, "If momma isn't happy, nobody is happy." So for your sake, as well as her sake, love your wife!

How, then, should we love our wives? Well, love your wife the way you love your own body. Even so, Paul tells us in v.29 two specific ways we are to love our wives, "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church." So we should love our wives:

1. By Nourishing Her - This word (*ektrepho*) means to nourish or feed. It was primarily used of nourishing and bringing up children (6:4). When a man is hungry, he will feed his flesh. Amen? A good feeling follows the act of nourishing. And Paul is not thinking only of supplying the body with barely enough food, clothing and shelter to enable it to eek out a mere existence; he refers instead to the bounteous, elaborate, unremitting, and sympathetic care we bestow on our bodies.

Even so, a man should nourish his wife. He is to provide for her physical needs, and do for her at least as much as he does for himself. Make sure her physical needs are fully met. She really likes it when you take her out to eat!

2. By Cherishing Her - Here again, this word (*thalpo*) was used primarily of a parent/child relationship. It means to warm and to cherish as a mother does an infant in her bosom (1 Th. 2:7).

Even so, husbands are to cherish our wives. Make sure her emotional needs are met. We should give our wives a lot of hugging and affection. Dr. Willard Harley, in his excellent book, *His Needs Her Needs*, outlines the top five needs in marriage for husbands and wives. Based on his research, he lists affection as the #1 need of a wife. So cherish your wife as you do your own body.

Now our love for our own bodies illustrates one more truth about the kind of love we are to have for our wives:

3. By Commitment to Her – I have pointed out that in v.31 Paul quotes from Genesis, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Because you are one with your wife, you should do as the Old Testament Scripture says, and that is cleave to your wife with a commitment to permanence. This arm is part of my body. I want to keep my arm because it is a vital part of my body. I will do everything I can to keep it an active part of my body. Men, your wife is to be as much a part of you as your arm is a part of you. Just as you will do all you can to keep your arm, you should do all you can to keep your wife. There is great security in the love of Christ for His Church. We are a part of His body, and nothing, according to Romans 8:35-39, shall separate us from the love of Christ. Your wife needs the security of knowing that nothing will separate her from your love.

A nurse shared this story of faithful commitment: It was a busy morning, approximately 8:30 a.m., when an elderly gentleman, in his 80's, arrived to have stitches removed from his thumb. He stated that he was in a hurry as he had an appointment at 9:00 a.m. She took his vital signs and had him take a seat, knowing it would be over an hour before someone would be able to see him. She saw him looking at his watch and decided, since she was not busy with another patient, she would evaluate his wound. On exam, it was well healed, so she talked to one of the doctors, got the needed supplies to remove his sutures and redress his wound.

While taking care of his wound, they began to engage in conversation. She asked him if he had another doctor's appointment that morning, as he was in such a hurry. The gentleman told her no, that he needed to go to the nursing home to eat breakfast with his wife. She then inquired as to

her health. He told her that his wife had been there for a while and that she was a victim of Alzheimer Disease. As they talked, she asked if she would be worried if he was a bit late. He replied that she no longer knew who he was, that she had not recognized him in five years now. She was surprised, and asked him. “And you still go every morning, even though she doesn't know who you are?” He smiled as he patted her hand and said. “She doesn't know me, but I still know who she is.”²

Conclusion: Men, I have set before you the kind of love you are to have for your wives. We are to have *agape* love, a love that is unselfish, that meets needs. We are to love our wives like Christ loved the Church, with a sacrificial, purifying love. What an example! And we are to love our wives as our own bodies. That means that we will nourish and cherish our wives. We will have an unconditional commitment to keep our wives, as we keep the members of our own bodies.

You say, “How can I love like that?” This kind of love comes from God. 1 Jn. 4:7 says, “... Love [*agape*] is of God...” The Holy Spirit gives the Christian the ability to express this kind of love (Rom. 5:5). So if you are going to succeed in fulfilling the command of v.25, you must first obey the command of v.18! You need the filling of the Holy Spirit, and you will manifest the fruits of the Spirit, which includes love (Gal. 5:22). So a good and right relationship with the Lord is essential for you to be able to express this kind of love.

But many husbands are not even indwelt by the Spirit. In such cases, the first step to improving your marriage would be to trust in Christ as your Savior, and receive the Holy Spirit. If you need to be saved, will you trust Christ as your Savior today? If you are already a Christian, will you trust in the Lord to grant you the filling of the Holy Spirit? Will you make a commitment today to love your wife as Christ love the Church?

Sources: Francis Foulkes, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967); Jim Henry (notes from his topical sermon based on this text); Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (New York: Robert Carter and Bros., 1860); Tim Lahaye, *How To Be Happy Though Married* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1968); Lightner-Laing, *Success In Family Living* (Denver, CO: B/P Publications, 1977); John MacArthur, Jr., *Family Feuding: How to End It: Study Notes on Ephesians 5:21-6:4* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1981); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible [CD-ROM]* (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Charles R. Swindoll, *Strike the Original Match* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1974); Lehman Strauss, *Galatians and Ephesians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957); Curtis Vaughan, *A Study Guide Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977); Norman Williams, *The Christian Home* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1952); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953); Ed Young, *Romancing the Home: How to have a Marriage that Sizzles* (Nashville: Broadman & Hollman, 1994). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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² From Mikey's Funnies in *Preaching Now*, 2/8/05.