

Commentary and Questions | Ephesians 5:25-33

The Role of the Husband

Commentary:

"If the word which characterizes the wife's duty is submit, the word characterizing the husband's is love." With that said, Paul uses two analogies to explain the kind of love a husband is called to display towards his wife. First, husbands are to love their wife as Christ loves the church (v. 25). Further, Paul uses five verbs to describing this kind of love and the motive for this kind of love. These verbs are not only true about how Christ loves His people but are also true for husbands that aspire to become the kind of husband that God has called them to be! These verbs are highly comprehensive in describing a husband's love for his bride and therefore highly relevant for husbands today.

- 1. Christ loved the church** – The kind of love described here is not some weak, half-hearted love. The word used here is "agape" which refers to a strong, sacrificial, unconditional love. This kind of love says, "I am here to pour out love to you regardless of how you perform even if that means me sacrificing time and energy."
- 2. Christ gave Himself up for the church** – Many husbands might say that they love their wives, and mean it with deep sincerity. However, there is a point at which this kind of love goes from feelings and words to actions! The kind of love that Jesus has for His people moves him to do the single greatest act of service that world has ever known!
- 3. Christ cleanses and sanctifies the church** – These two verbs indicate the present process of making his church holy both in character and in conduct through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Christ has a deep and genuine desire to see the church live in communion with God. In much the same way, a husband is called to care not only about the wife's physical well being but also about her spiritual well being. Further, no husband can truly care for his wife spiritually if he first does not have a genuine love for God and for the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- 4. Christ will present the church to Himself** - Once the sanctification process is over and the bride is made holy, Christ will present His church to Himself in splendor. This verb has an "eschatological" reference, which means that this presenting of the church will take place when Christ returns to earth. You can see that Jesus' love for the church is pervasive and never ending. These verbs take us from the before the earth was created (Christ loved us then) until the he returns (Christ presents the church then) and sustains the church every step of the way (gives Himself up, cleanses and sanctifies).

Second, Paul tells husbands to love their wives as they love themselves and their own bodies. Paul goes from describing the great love that Christ has for the church to a more humble, mundane self-love that all men have for themselves. It is like he saying, "You are not going to fathom the kind of love that Jesus has for his church, but you will certainly understand self-love!" In the same way, Jesus calls his disciples to love their neighbor as you love yourself. We humans do not fully understand Christ's love and undoubtedly have difficulty applying His principles to marriage and the family.

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However we understand self-love. Paul elaborates on this idea by saying that, “no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it...” This basically means that men will take care of and look after their body. The logic here is clear: The husband and wife are united and the “two become one flesh.” The husband then should view his wife not so much as a separate individual but as a part of his own flesh. This really is as Paul says a “profound mystery!”

In conclusion, the Gospel is quintessential to a husband carrying out his God-giving role. In other words, where does a husband find the strength, power and resources to love his wife with this kind of love? I do not know about you, but it appears that men do not naturally have this sort of inner power! On the contrary, a husband has the capacity to Biblically love his wife to the extent that he understands the kind of love he has been given in Christ! I would challenge, exhort and encourage all husbands to dwell deeply on the Gospel and on all that you have been given in Christ! This is of utmost importance! The Gospel is what saves, sustains, empowers and enables Christians to live a godly life.

Questions:

1. Write down any questions, ideas, or thoughts that you had from the passage or sermon.
2. In your own words, explain how Christ loved the church.
3. Biblical love is always accompanied by actions. What are some ways you as a husband can show love to your wife?
4. Explain in your own words what it means to love your wife as your own body? Read verse 31. What marital truth does Paul base this command on?
5. Explain how the Gospel is what empowers a husband to be the kind of husband that God has called him to be.
6. What are some practical applications for a husband as a result of this passage? What things in your life do you need to change or begin?