

Husbands And Wives

Love

Ephesians 5:25-30

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their 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 Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:25-30 (ESV))

For me, these words are some of the most delightful words to ever grace the pages of these scriptures. I declare to you that within these words, as nowhere else in the scriptures, Christ Himself comes to live within the souls of husbands, delighting the hearts and lives of their wives and making marriages the most precious relationship that mankind could ever imagine or hope for.

I know that my words are a strong statement, but I know them to be true. This is God's desire and His plan for us. How can we know that for sure? Where do the scriptures tell us that truth? Right at the beginning! Listen, these words from Genesis 2 . . .

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (Genesis 2:18 (ESV))

So then, we can know for sure that this is God's desire and His plan for us. And if and to the degree that we husbands pursue after this kind of loving relationship with our wives, we can be assured that the very same Spirit within the love relationship we enjoy with Christ will also be within the relationship of our marriage. God guarantees it! And yes, I know that these words are "mystical", completely outside the realms of natural understanding. That is why the natural mind of men never quite comprehends them. We see the proof of that being played out daily within the lives of the people of this world, relationships coming and going with every wind that blows.

And yes, all men and women everywhere do want and hope for the kind of loving relationship that is spoken about in these words. But such love as this has only one possible entranceway into the hearts of men and no other, and that is through salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ and through the indwelling presence of His Precious Spirit. No other way! No other possibility!

Folks, even for the wisest of men and women among us, “love” is an incomprehensible concept. And that is true whether a person be a believer in Christ or an unbeliever. Love is simply an incomprehensible concept. But if we do have the Spirit of Christ abiding within us, then we have made a first step towards comprehending the depths of its meaning.

The simple word itself, “love”, whether expressed on the pages of these scriptures, or in other books we read, or even as it is passionately spoken within a relationship, can often be confusing, both to the one saying it and to the one hearing it, because there really are different forms and measures of love, especially depending upon the context and the people involved.

And yes, even those who do not have Christ as their Savior can sincerely and intensely experience some forms of love. Certainly most all people can, to some measure, feel and express the form of love called, “phileo love”, “brotherly love”, the kind we feel towards friends and neighbors. And parents and children experience “storge love”, the kind of love that flows within family relationships. And most all the people on the earth seek after and enjoy “eros love”, the kind of love that is mostly physical and emotional. But this kind of love that is spoken about here in these words, “agape love”, is of a very different nature and expression! Yes, we feel and experience all those other kinds of love so commonly that our minds we can imagine their meanings. And we see those expressions of love in poems and songs and love stories. But it is not the same with this very special gift and experience of “agape love”. This kind of love comes to us from unfathomable sources and will forever remain beyond our natural comprehension. Its unique difference begins with the manner in which it comes to us. While the scriptures are not explicit in their definition of its meaning, we know from its usage that it is uniquely a part of the very essence of God Himself. It is with “agape love” that God so loves the world that He would send His only begotten Son to die on the cross and save us from our sins (John 3:16).

And in John 21, it is in the question that Jesus asked Peter when He said, “Peter do you love me, do your “agape” Me?” But it was also that word “agape love” that Peter could not fathom at the time and could only respond to with, “well, I do have brotherly affection, “phileo love”, for you”.

And again, as we see in John 3:16, yes, God can love both believers and unbelievers alike with “agape love”. And we know that you and I can also love in that way, because we are commanded by God to love our neighbor with that same “agape love” whether that neighbor be a believer or not.

But though we as believers can love an unbeliever with “agape love”, it is not possible for an unbelieving soul to reciprocate back to us with the same “agape love”. These scriptures seem emphatic that “Agape love” is only possible for those who first have Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and have His Spirit abiding within them.

“Agape love” is a fruit of the Holy Spirit that arises out of the Spirit’s presence within us.

22 . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, (agape love) joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

God’s use of that visual analogy of “fruit of the Spirit” is intentional so that you and I can understand that concept. A fruit is borne out from the branch and the vine of its origin. And these fruits of

22 . . . love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

come only from the Holy Spirit as we abide in the vine of Christ and they are never a natural part of our own personality.

May I say that again with all certainty, “agape love”, is a fruit of God’s Holy Spirit and is not a human ability that is owned and manifested by a man’s own effort or emotion, leaving us with the simple truth that a husband cannot love his wife with “agape love” if he does not have the Spirit of Christ dwelling within him.

A question . . . I have used these very same words to counsel husbands that may not be saved. Yes, I would ask them if they were saved and they would say yes. But sometimes I still was left to wonder. In those cases, were my words of counsel wasted? Perhaps they were. I certainly should have no expectation of a Godly response from a confirmed unbeliever. But with that being said, I have concluded that I ought to press on ahead and give all these words to believers and unbelievers alike. These words contain the essence of the gospel within them and for that reason alone, I should continue to give it.

Another question . . . in these words, as God commands the husband to “love” his wife with “agape love”. Is it alright for the husband to also have the other kinds of love for his wife, “phileo love”, and “storge love”, and “eros love? Yes, those kinds of love are each a part of our affections towards one another.

The most well-defined blessings of “love” and the most familiar expressions of “love” are given in the words of what has come to be known as the “love chapter” in our bible, 1 Corinthians 13. May I read those words to us, beginning in verse 4,

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not

rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (ESV))

These are precious words, and yes we who have Christ dwelling within us are able to love all people with this blessed kind of love. But nowhere is this blessed “agape love” more precious and wonderfully enjoyed than in the intimate relationship of marriage.

Two verses readily come to my mind as I ponder this very special and unique relationship of love within a marriage, and both verses were given to us at the very beginning of man’s existence to help the man and his wife to better understand the special nature and condition of their marriage. They are found in Genesis 2. Join me there and read along with me, beginning in verse 21

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:21-25 (ESV))

The first of these verses that I would like for us to consider is verse 24,
Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

May I repeat a statement that I make often to us, and that is, that God never wastes even one word within these scriptures? All these words are intentional and they carry with them a wealth of precious meaning.

Because Adam and Eve had no earthly father or mother, we know that God gave these words for the benefit of all who would follow after Adam and Eve, their children and their children’s children continuing on to you and me and to everyone who will come after us. And these words are plain and simple to understand. As children are born and grow into adulthood, they are under the direction and authority of their parents. But once they enter into the relationship of marriage, all of that changes. The husband and wife must leave the direction and authority of their father and mother immediately and become “one” with each other, under their own authority, under the direction and guidance of the husband.

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

And may I say loudly and clearly to all husbands and wives and to their fathers and mothers, God is emphatic about this. There is absolutely no room in the family of a man and his wife for the authority and guidance of the parents, advice sometimes yes, but only as a matter of loving counsel and never as a matter of authority. And may I put it as kindly as I know how, "Parents get out of the marriage relationships of your children! You do not belong there and God will not treat your interference with gentle hands!"

But also, you husbands and wives do not invite the authority and guidance of your parents back into your lives. It will always be a recipe for destruction.

Read on with me . . . these next words . . .

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

A man must hold fast to His wife and never let her go, neither in the matters of daily life, nor in a permanent separation. We can see clearly in the verses that follow these how Adam immediately violated these words, and the disaster that took place because of his neglect. In just the next few verses, we see where Adam abdicated his responsibilities of guidance and authority allowing the devil to beguile his wife and tempt her into sinning, and every man, woman and child since has suffered because of Adam's failure. Folks, these words are very serious business. So husbands, hold fast to your wife!

And then, the next words,

24 and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

May I say simply that I have come to realize the wonder and the enjoyment of these words over the almost 44 years of marriage to my wife! In these words, we are given a simple math equation, one that most mathematicians are unable to reconcile, that being $1 + 1 = 1$. Yes, most all the rest of the time, $1 + 1$ equals 2, but not in this special relationship between a husband and wife. How can that be? The answer is a mysterious one, but one that is true. Simply put, when I came into this world I was not quite a whole one person. And the same was true for my wife. We looked and functioned as if we were a complete "one person", but we were not. It took the marriage of us "almost 1s" to make "one complete one".

Does that sound mystical? It is, and it is also “romantic” and also “absolutely true”. How do I know that? These words tell me so.

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

Yes, I know that many a person, even preachers have relegated these words down to being a simple analogy or metaphor. But they are wrong! This is mystical yes, but it is as real as real can get. And it really, really works! My wife and I are one! We live alike, we think alike and we love alike. And when it is necessary for us to be apart from each other’s company, it is as if we have a part of our own self that is missing. And that is because a part of us really is missing. We are one, never to be separated again throughout all of life! And that special “oneness” provides a condition within the relationship that is found in no other.

One last consideration of these words before we close . . . Verse 25 . . .

25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.
(Genesis 2:25 (ESV))

Folks, yes this may be an analogy or a metaphor, but it is also very true. In no other relationship can this take place, that one person can walk naked before another person and not be ashamed. And these words do not just mean “physically naked”. These words include all the many little details of life, some of them often appearing to be foolish and childish.

As a husband and wife take on the “oneness” that God intends and as they spend the intimate hours of each day secluded away in the privacy of their homes, they get to know each other with depths that no other relationship affords. And all those many little details of life can have within them occurrences and missteps that often appear to be foolish or childish, or embarrassing. But because we are “one” and because we truly do “love” each other, we are able to respond with love and concern and consolation instead of criticism and unkindness.

Recall the words we just read from 1 Corinthians 13. And I’ll close by reading them. Listen!

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.
(1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (ESV))