

Husbands And Wives

Husband Love Your Wife

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))

As we continue to study these precious words about the loving relationship that God has given to “Husbands and Wives”, may I call back to our mind recent messages, first on verse 21 where God commands each of us to be under submission to one another, and then in verses 22-24 the command for wives to be submissive to their husbands? In those messages, we spoke about why God gives “commands” to His children. And we asked the question, “Why and under what circumstances does God deem it necessary to give commands to you and me?” And we said that God will give commands to us when the thing that He is commanding us to do does not come as a natural response within our given nature! In other words, as in the case with submission, having a submissive response towards one another is not a natural response within any person’s character, and expressly it is not within a wife’s natural character towards her husband; and so God gives a direct command to her . . . to be under submission to her husband.

Yes, some people, some wives are, by nature more passive and easygoing than others. But beneath the surface of every personality is an independent nature that at some level will always revert back to the demands of self and pride, “my claim to my right to myself”.

Now here in verse 25, we find another command being given from God, this time, specifically addressed to us husbands, saying . . .

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. (Ephesians 5:25)

Some years ago, after reading this verse countless numbers of times, I suddenly read it again “for the very first time”. As odd as those words sound, they are true. I had

read this verse so many, many times over the years, but it had never reached passed a “casual understanding” of what it might mean to me as a husband.

And yes, I had also read the words of 1 Corinthians 13 on many occasions and I really thought that I understood them, and to some measure I thought that “lived them”.

Those words again,

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))

But as I read these words of Ephesians 5 on that occasion,

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I was suddenly brought under one of the most dramatic convictions that I had ever experienced in all my years as a Christian. God’s Holy Spirit took hold of my heart and compelled me to begin asking myself, “Do I really love my wife in this way, as Christ loves her; because that is exactly what these words really mean?” The “church” is the body of believers who have received Christ as Savior and Lord. And my wife is one of those believers. So then, the question becomes, “Do I love my wife as Christ loves her?”

And immediately I knew that “I did not” and that this would be one of the most difficult questions I would ever find need of answers to.

May I pause here for a moment and reflect . . . that God is a very wise and loving Father, a Father who knows that exact special “right moment in time” to move His beloved children on to a “next level” in their growth and in their relationship with Him. And looking back, it is clear to see that this was one of those moments with the Lord and me.

In those moments, God simple said to me, “My beloved child, it’s time to get up and move on with me. It’s time for you to know me and love me all the more, and it will begin with your relationship with your wife”.

And the Spirit of Christ began asking me, “Bill, are you willing to love your wife as I love her?” And His compelling voice caused me to respond with, “Yes, I really want too, but I don’t know how. Tell me how to love her, and especially, tell me how You love her?”

And it was within those moments that I was immediately “brought to my knees in repentance”; because by the unction of His Spirit I knew that what I had within me and all that I had been doing in the past was nothing like Christ’s measure of love, that all that I had been experiencing was simple human emotion and not much more.

And, in my repentance, I began to ask God’s Spirit to guide and to help me with it all, to put within me all that it was going to take to get from where I was to where I needed to be in fulfilling this blessed command of “husband love your wife as Christ loves her”.

As I began to consider the question, “How does Christ love my wife”, the Holy Spirit first reminded me of these words, “He loved her and gave Himself for her”. Jesus was not just “willing” to “give Himself”, but He was actually willing to follow through and to actually “die” for her. And He did actually die for her. And He did it for the reason that we are told here in these words . . .

26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present . . . (her) to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:26-27)

But immediately, I knew that I could not do exactly as He did. Christ is the One and Only person who can be another person’s Savior. And I dared not try to usurp His position and authority. But with that being said, I still had this command that had been clearly given to me.

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So then, what was I to do? How was I to obey His clearly given command? One of the first answers that was brought to my mind was given in Romans 12. Knowing that God was not calling me to physically die, as Jesus did, I still knew that there was a death to die, a sacrifice to be made. And these words began my quest towards understanding. Listen!

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV))

There truly is a death to be died, a sacrifice to be made by each of us if we ever hope to have a relationship with Christ. And in many ways, our death really becomes a very

“literal death”, one that is truly painful, and ever so difficult to carry out, but a death that is required nonetheless before a person can ever move on forward with the Lord.

It is a message that is for another day, but simply put, from the words of Romans chapter 6, we know that we must first “die to self”, “die” to that obsessive demand for “my claim to my right to myself” that lurks within each of us, before we can ever hope to be able to “love others”, as Christ loves them, especially our wives.

Folks, “self” is the most dominating “entity” on the face of the earth, demanding everything for itself, and for only itself to be loved. “Self” really does not and cannot love others. It is too needful for love for its own needs to be able to reach out and to love others.

That is why most marriages fail. Most marriages are simply “two selves” crying out, each for the other to love them and to meet their needs, but themselves unwilling to “give up self”, to “die to self” and to love the other. It is a pitifully wretched condition that corrupts and controls most all marriages.

And that was my first obstacle to overcome. I recognized that I was one of those “pitifully wretched selves”. And I saw that my wife was also one of those “pitifully wretched selves”, each of us crying out for the other one to love us, but all the while, ourselves needing to “die to our own wretched self”.

Thankfully, God’s Spirit was guiding my thoughts in those moments, else I would have resorted to the “natural” conclusion that usually comes to mind, and is so often wrongfully used by marriage counselors, that of both the husband and wife sitting down at a table and trying to work out how the other one should go about solving their problems for them.

But from God’s Spirit I knew that that kind of solution was not the answer to gaining real love! I knew that I needed to look far deeper.

Thankfully, in my quest, God brought a thought to my mind in the form of a question. “Why is it that nowhere in these scriptures do we find a command from God for the wife to love her husband?”

Recall again the general rule for God’s giving of His commands. “God will give a command to us when the thing that He is commanding us to do does not come as a natural response within our given nature!”

I quickly came to realize that the “response of love” was actually a “natural response” within the heart of a wife, that she did not need to be commanded to love her husband, that her love would come as a natural response to the husband if he first shows love for her. Where did I get that conclusion from? It came from the words in 1 John, 19 We love Him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

We are the “bride of Christ”, “His wife”, and He is “our husband”. Why did we ever turn our hearts to Him in salvation and love Him? It is because He first loved us! And His first loving us “drew” us to respond and love Him back.

May I say that again! The love of a “bride”, a “wife” is a “responding” form of love. As the “bride of Christ” we were “drawn” to love Christ because He first loved us. From that realization about our love for Christ, I came to understand that God had designed the very same plan for me and my wife, that in order for her to be able to love me, I would first need to love her.

May I say it another way. Instead of me and my wife standing in each other’s face demanding that the other one meet our needs, if I would first give up my “demands of self” and first love her, then she would give up her “demands of self” and love me back. And that would solve all the needs of the both of us that we had been desiring and crying out for.

And so, I committed myself to that quest . . . the quest of loving my dear wife, for the first time, in the right way. And I recall those first days clearly. I really did not know how to begin, so I looked around for an example of a “love relationship” that I believed patterned the love of Christ. And that special love relationship was being clearly demonstrated by some of our closest friends, the Newman family. Nowhere had I witnessed the “love of Christ” being lived out in a family like I witnessed with Ralph and Margie Newman.

So, I went to them for counsel. And through guidance that they offered, especially Margie, I was set on the path to where we are today, to the most blessed relationship of love that my wife and I could ever hope for.

Because of the limited time available in this message, I’ll not be able to share all the details that took place in those beginning days of my “quest to love my wife”, but needful to say is that I began to “intentionally” die to my “self”, and to intentionally begin showing my love, the love of Christ, towards my wife. And true to the words of this scripture, my wife immediately began to “respond” to my love for her by loving me back. And from those first days through this very moment, our love for each other has

grown and grown, limited only by those momentary missteps that occasionally take place within a relationship, but are quickly resolved through repentance and love.

May I take a moment and go back and clarify something that I said a moment ago, that yes, there are times, perhaps often, that a husband and wife should sit down and discuss their problems. It is a good thing to do, but please understand that such efforts are not the first and real answer to this command. The first and real answer to this command is first for the husband to love his wife. And then, such “sit downs” will have as their discussion how each of them can love each other better and all the more.

Folks, these scriptures are clear. The beginning point must always start with “dying to self” and with “sincere repentance”. It is only then that we can turn from being “takers” to being “givers”, just as Christ and His “bride” are towards each other.

But may I say again also, in as strong a manner as I can express, the husband must always take the lead and immediately so. And he must begin to very intentionally, purposefully and openly show “the love of Christ” to his wife. That is God’s plan and His design for the perfect marriage. The husband taking the lead and never relinquishing his responsibilities as the “leader” and especially the “Spiritual leader” within the relationship, showing, demonstrating, openly, “out loud” and visibly so that the wife is never left to wonder or question his behaviors.

Why is it so necessary for the husband to be so “out front”, “open” and “visible”? It is because just as you and I always need to be able to “see Christ” and to trust with all certainty that He is intimately involved in all the many details of daily life, especially the troubling ones, so also, a wife has a deeply-felt need to know that her husband is “close at hand” and “supportive” and will take her side and lead her through the troubling moments of each day. It is part of what the “oneness” spoken about here is all about.

So then again, husbands be the “leaders” and especially the “Spiritual leaders” within your relationship, showing, demonstrating, openly, out loud and visibly so that your wife is never left to wonder but can always rest in the confidence and assurance that she is loved and protected.

And if you will love her, as Christ loves her, everything will change! You will change! Your wife will change! Your children will change! And all for the best! God guarantees it!

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