

Husbands And Wives To Sanctify Her

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))

In all the marriage ceremonies that I have had the privilege of participating within, I have intentionally given these blessed words of scripture to serve as the foundation for the new relationship of marriage the husband and wife were entering into. And I do count these words as being of that vital importance because anything that is being built must have a firm and trustworthy “foundation”, else it will not endure.

Jesus warned us of that truth in giving us the parable about the house that was built upon the sand. He said that when the winds came and the storms beat down upon that house, it fell, and “great was its fall”! But not so the house that was built upon the foundation of a solid rock! It was able to stand firm throughout all of the winds and storms that came against it.

And so also, that is true for a marriage relationship that is built upon the solid rock of Jesus Christ. That marriage is able to withstand the worst of winds and storms that come against it.

And that assurance is so very comforting to me. But may I say also that the benefits of the blessed relationship we have with Christ reach far beyond just being a means of protection against the storms of life. Jesus also brings with Him many, many other blessed provisions, good and precious gifts of love that make all the days of our life “a comfortable walk in green pastures”.

And again, yes, such special “experiences of love” is what most all men and women desire and seek after, a love that meets all their earthly needs and provides joy and happiness. But unfortunately, most husbands and wives never find it. And that is especially so when the relationship is between a husband and wife who do not have

the solid rock of Christ as their foundation. For them, when the storms of life come, and those storms surely will come, their foundation of sand gives way; and they find that their love relationship and their marriage is suddenly washed away and lost forever.

That is why these precious words about “love” are so very important for us to accept and to understand and to embrace! Every part of our relationship with Christ and every part of our relationship with our husband or our wife is dependent upon this one word, “love”.

May I pause here for a moment and bring back to our minds some of the understanding we received in an earlier message regarding “love”, and especially to consider again the usual forms of love that men and women experience. In that earlier message, we talked about four kinds of love that are spoken of within these scriptures, three of which can be felt and experienced by most all people, even those who do not have Christ within their lives. One of those kinds of love that can be experienced by all people is called, “phileo love”, “brotherly love”, the kind we feel towards friends and neighbors. Another similar kind of love is that which parents and children experience, “storge love”, the kind of love that flows within family relationships. A third kind of love, the one that most all the people on the earth seek after and enjoy is “eros love”, the kind of love that is mostly physical and emotional.

The fourth kind of love, “agape love”, stands alone and is of a whole different nature and expression from the other forms of love. “Agape love” is especially unique in that it is only present within those people who have received Christ as their Savior and Lord. Christ Himself is present within “agape love” and He continually blesses and strengthens its foundation. That is why, as the winds blow and the storms come, “agape” love can stand firm.

And may I say with all clarity of understanding that unless and until both the husband and wife are truly saved, until they have Christ securely within their heart as their Savior and Lord, these precious words that we are considering here today can never really come into being. Christ as Savior and Lord is absolutely essential to the Godly “agape love” relationship.

That is why God is so clear and plain in His warnings about being “unequally yoked” together with an unbeliever. Listen to these words and mark them well within your bible!

14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15

What accord has Christ with Belial, (the devil)? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (2 Corinthians 6:14-16 (ESV)

Great care must be taken before entering into a relationship of marriage. Too often, the husband or the wife is a believer, but the other one is not. Yes, the unbeliever might want to believe, and actually believe that they believe and are saved. Such confusion takes place too often here within the "Bible belt" south. We grow up in church. Our family members are saved and we think that we are saved, but somewhere along the line, we fell short.

And therein is the continual pitfall that couples fall into. One is truly saved, but the other is not, and it only begins to show after the marriage has gotten into stormy trials and part of the foundation begins to give way. And unfortunately, too often, there are also precious children who suffer terribly in the process.

And yes, we do read in 1 Corinthians 7, that sometimes an unbeliever might later become saved, and with their salvation being directly brought about by the Godly lifestyle of the believing spouse. Listen, 1 Corinthians 7,

12 . . . if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. 13 If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. 16 For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?
(1 Corinthians 7:12-16 (ESV)

Folks, these words are so precious and filled with hope. And we do pray for the unbelieving husbands and wives in those "unequally yoked" relationships, but please realize that such response by an unbelieving spouse often does not take place. I say these words as a warning to those optimistic believers who decide to go ahead and "unequally yoke" themselves together with an unbeliever, just on the hope that they can later "save" their unbelieving spouse. Such decisions are simply not in accord with God's will.

So then, all men and women must take great care as they enter into the relationship of marriage. Both the man and the woman must be securely saved in Christ. It is then and only then that the precious wonders of a loving marriage can truly begin to take place.

And again, the command is 25

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

Notice carefully also the words that God gives next, beginning in verse 26. These words reach deeply into all that we have been saying over these past few minutes . . .

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Again, let's remind ourselves of what we are reading here, that the analogy and the pattern we are to follow is "Christ in His love for us, His church", and "a husband in his love for his wife". And within the foundation, the solid "rock", upon which the relationship of marriage is to be built, is the Person of Christ, and the special "agape" form of love that is only present within the heart and soul of a believer. And again, that foundation that Christ provides is through His sufferings and His death for us, His "bride". It is only through His death on the cross that we, His bride, can be "sanctified", made "Holy". Listen!

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Husbands, may I declare to us that Christ's example is clear and plain. While we might not be able to fully grasp the understanding of how we lowly and wretched creatures might "sanctify" our wives, God is assuring us that He can make that take place if we will firmly commit ourselves to follow the precious path laid out for us here in these words.

First, may we understand clearly what the word "sanctify" means. And may I begin by repeating the warning that I gave in an earlier message. No one except Christ Himself can actually "save" another person from their sins. Christ and Christ alone brings

salvation to our soul. And we husbands should never assume that we can do any part of that with our wives.

However, with that being said, from the words that we have just read in 1 Corinthians 7, husbands, we know that we can participate in the “salvation” and the “sanctification” of our wives. And that is what these words are telling us about. Those words again from 1 Corinthians 7

14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy (sanctified) because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy (sanctified) because of her husband.
(1 Corinthians 7:14)

And that is the same understanding that we receive from these words here in Ephesians 5; that we husbands not only can, but are also being commanded to take the responsibility to actively initiate and to carry forward with the sanctification of our wives.

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These are not just powerful words, these are “power-filled” words. They carry with them all of the power and the resources of the Kingdom of God. They are words of promise, words that assure us husbands that if we will only follow these very simple commands, wonders beyond our imagination will take place within our marriages.

In these words, we are being instructed to assume the most Christ-filled role we have ever imagined, a role in which we “cleanse” our wives by “washing” her with the pure and cleansing word of God. Do those words seem “odd” to you? They sure seemed odd to me when I first began to study them. But they are not really “odd” at all. They are simple words of truth.

As husbands, we are to be the Spiritual leaders of our family, ourselves filled with God’s Holy Spirit and fully committed not only to our own sanctification, but also to the salvation and the sanctification of our family members, especially our wives. And while yes, we ought to be very knowledgeable and thoroughly studied in these words of God, it will not be our “cleverness” of speech and our “presentation” of these words that will bring about the sanctification of our wife. The power to do that is already within these “words of God”. These words are powerful beyond measure. Hebrews 4,

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

The words of God carry their own power. All that we husbands need to do is to very intentionally and purposefully and diligently “pour out” this word upon our wives daily, and all throughout each day, so much so that such “pouring out” will become a way of life for us.

We must pray with her often, several times a day, fervently bringing family and friends and other concerns before the throne of God. We must take her to church so that she can hear more and more of the precious words of God. We must do bible studies and spend devotional times with her. And if we will be faithful to do those things, then God will be faithful to do all the rest. He will sanctify our wife, make her holy, purify her soul and set her apart for His special plans and purposes. That is what these words mean and that is what these words command us husbands to do, to be the Spiritual leaders of our family and to “pour out” God’s word upon our wives. Listen!

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

One last thought! These words have an implicit warning hidden within them. That warning is that if we husbands do not “pour out” the cleansing words of God upon our wives all throughout the day, but instead “pour out” the corrupt “ways of the flesh” upon her, she will just as quickly be guided by that.

In other words, if our wives watch as we curse our neighbor, as we cheat in our business dealings, as we complain about those in authority over us, as we complain about our work and our co-workers, as we choose to watch ungodly programming on our television or in the movie houses, as we take advantage of other people in their weaknesses, then be assured, our wives will be guided by all that we do and say. Now please understand that I don’t mean to paint our wives as being mindless and unable to make decisions for themselves, not at all; it is simply the nature that God has put within them, to join in with us in our beliefs and in our behaviors.

There is a special portion of scripture that was not initially given between a wife and a husband, but I believe is appropriate to our understanding of these words here before

us today. They come from a promise that Ruth made to her mother-in-law Naomi in the Book of Ruth. There, Ruth declared,

16 . . . Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried." (Ruth 1:16-17 (NIV))

Husbands, we must understand that this is what our wives will do in their faithfulness to us. So we must be ever-so careful in our leadership of our wives. Everything that we think and say and do is being carefully observed by them. And God has put within their souls to follow us, wherever we go. So, guard your steps carefully and do as these precious words command . . .

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