

**EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS**  
**"The Responsibility of the Christian Husband"**  
**Ephesians 5:25-33**

**Mililani Community Church**  
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Perhaps you saw the front page article in the Honolulu Advertiser this past Friday entitled "Residents Resist As Homes Crumble." The article talked about the pounding waves and sand have ripped the foundations from about a dozen homes on the North Shore, leaving them just barely clinging to the edge of a cliff.

As I pondered the picture of a young man perched beside his house as it tottered on the brink of destruction, I couldn't help thinking of a moral and spiritual parallel: The pounding of winter waves against those homes on the North Shore presents a picture of the godless and destructive influences in our culture that are now pounding away at the foundations of marriage and the family leaving so many of them battered and broken.

The article went on to say that if those houses on the North Shore are not moved to a firm foundation soon, they will eventually be destroyed . In the same way our marriages and our families need to have a firm foundation if they are to be preserved. And God has given us that firm foundation in His Word.

God is the one who invented marriage in the first place--and He has designed a specific plan by which a marriage and a family is to work. We need to go back to His original design. This design is unfolded for us in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. And in our verse by verse exposition of Ephesians we have now come to this section on God's plan for the Christian home.

Last Sunday morning we looked at the role of a wife in God's design. We learned that in a marriage according to God's design, there is a woman who has trusted Jesus Christ as her personal savior and has submitted herself totally to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the absolute Ruler of her life--and then out of love and devotion to the Lord she honors and respects her husband and submits to him as the one whom God has ordained to be the Head of the home.

This morning we are considering God's design for husbands. It can be summed up in verse 25. "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"

Notice, it doesn't say husbands rule your wives, or husbands command your wives, or husbands subjugate your wives. No, Paul says "husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

**The question we want to answer this morning is:**

## **"What does it mean for a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the Church?"**

**Beginning in verse 25, we find four specific ways that husbands are to love their wives--following the pattern of Christ's love.**

### **I. HUSBANDS ARE TO LOVE THEIR WIVES UNCONDITIONALLY (25)**

The Greek word used in verse 25 to describe Christ's love is AGAPAO. This word carries with it the idea of unconditional love. This is the word that is used to describe God's love in Romans 5:8: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Apart from anything good or lovable in us, Christ loved us and gave his life for us.

We saw in our earlier study of Ephesians 1 that if you are a Christian, God set his love upon you before the foundation of the world. Not because of any good in you. Not because he foresaw that you would give your life to Him. He loved you simply because it is His nature to love---even the most unloveable.

That love is the model of how husbands are to love their wives. Your wife needs one thing from you above all else. She needs a taste of God's unconditional love!

Even in the best of marriages, sooner or later a need will arise that can only be met by unconditional love. I think this is illustrated in the life of Robertson McQuilkin the beloved former president of Columbia Bible College, and his wife, Muriel, who suffers from the advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease. In March, 1990 Dr. McQuilkin announced his resignation in a letter with these words: "My dear wife, Muriel, has been in failing mental health for about eight years. So far I have been able to carry both her ever-growing needs and my leadership responsibilities at CBC. But recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time she is with me and almost none of the time I am away from her. It is not just "discontent." She is filled with fear--even terror--that she has lost me and always goes in search of me when I leave home. Then she may be full of anger when she cannot get to me. So it is clear to me that she needs me now, full-time. Perhaps it would help you to understand if I shared with you what I shared at the time of the announcement of my resignation in chapel. The decision was made, in a way, 42 years ago when I promised to care for Muriel "in sickness and in health...till death do us part." So, as I told the students and faculty, as a man of my word, integrity has something to do with it. But so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years; if I cared for her for the next 40 years I would not be out of debt. Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more; I love Muriel. She is a delight to me--her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of that wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I do not have to care for her, I get to! It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person."

This beautiful picture of the love of a man for his wife did not just happen! It came from the inner resolve of a young husband who had determined forty-two years before to live

under the authority of God's Word regarding how a godly man must love his wife--with an unconditional Christ-like love.

So God commands us that husbands are to love their wives with an unconditional love. The next way husbands are to love their wives is found in the second part of verse 25...

## **II. HUSBANDS ARE TO LOVE THEIR WIVES SACRIFICIALLY (25b)**

Here Paul uses the phrase "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church...and gave himself up for her." Jesus' sacrificial love was shown to us when he left heaven, came to earth, took on humanity, and willingly suffered the pain and agony of the cross in our place. He loved us enough to give up his rights and sacrifice his life for us.

Paul's words to husbands were very radical in the cultural context of his day: "love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

Demosthenes an ancient writer said: "We have courtesans for the sake of pleasure; we have concubines for the sake of daily cohabitation; we have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately, and of having a faithful guardian of all our household affairs."

William Barclay has written: The ancient pagan man breathed adultery. The marriage bond was virtually meaningless. It was better with the Jews of Paul's day. But even they had a low view of women. The people of Israel were offered TWO VIEWS of when it was acceptable to end a marriage. Some Rabbis said you could divorce your wife for adultery only. Others said you could divorce your wife for almost anything. The ultra-liberal and very popular school of Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife for spoiling her husband's dinner, or putting too much salt in it, or for saying something against her mother-in-law. Rabbi Akiba even insisted that if a man found a woman who was prettier than his wife, his wife became unclean in his eyes. He could write her a bill of divorce, send her out, and marry the pretty one.

So we can see that "Paul's call for a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church was a radical departure from the domestic ethics of his time."

What does this kind of sacrificial love demand?

First it demands DEATH--dying to self.

Just as Jesus Christ set aside his rights in sacrificial love for the church, so the Christian husband must learn to set aside his rights as a display of love for his wife. Mike Mason, author of the classic book *The Mystery of Marriage*, says that marital love is like death--it wants all of us." Kent Hughes has written, "Marriage is a call to die, and a man who does not die for his wife does not come close to the love to which he is called. Christian marriage vows are the inception of a lifelong practice of death, of giving over not only all you have, but all you are....Is this a grim gallows call? Not at all. It is not more grim than dying to self and following Christ. In fact, those who lovingly die for their wives

are those who know the most joy, have the most fulfilling marriages, and experience the most love. It takes a strong man to die."

Secondly it demands SUFFERING.

When Jesus gave himself up for us, He not only died, He suffered. His suffering was not only His atoning death cross, but it is also the suffering which comes from identification with His bride, the Church. When Saul was fanatically persecuting the church in Acts chapter 9 he suddenly heard Jesus call to him from heaven and say, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" To persecute a child of God is to persecute the Lord Jesus. In the same way a husband is called to share with his wife her experiences of injustice, cruelty, disappointment. "When you properly hitch your life to another, you are in for a wild ride with huge ups and downs." Just as when you really love God you will undergo difficulties foreign to an unloving heart, so it is in marriage. You will share in her upsets, her insecurities, and despairs. But in doing this you will also know a deep joy that unloving hearts cannot know.

Thirdly, it demands INTERCESSION

On the evening Jesus gave himself up for us, John 17 says He prayed in succession for Himself, for His twelve disciples, and for all of us who would later believe in Him. When he finished praying he went to the cross. Then came his death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His enthronement at the right hand of God the Father, where he constantly makes intercession for us.

We understand from this that giving ourselves for our wives involves praying and interceding for them before our Heavenly Father. If all you ever pray for her each day is "Dear Lord bless Diane in all she does" you are sinning against her and against God. You ought to have a list of her needs which you earnestly hold up to God out of love for her.

Summary: So, loving our wives sacrificially means we are called to die for our wives, to take on her sufferings as our own, and to make intercession for her.

The third type of love a husband should have for his wife is found in verses 26-27.

### **III. HUSBANDS ARE TO LOVE THEIR WIVES WITH A PURIFYING LOVE (26-27)**

Christ's love for his church is a sanctifying love--a purifying love. He died on the cross and shed his own blood so that his people could be declared pure and forgiven. And his purifying work for us did not stop at the cross. In I John I we are told that Jesus keeps on cleansing us from all sin. He is constantly purifying us by his Word and Spirit so that one day we can be presented to Him as His holy and blameless eternal bride to dwell in his presence forever. Rev. 21:1.

APPLICATION: True love wants only the absolute best for the one it loves. True love cannot bear for a loved one to be corrupted or misled by anything evil or harmful. When

a husband loves his wife like Christ loves the church he will give himself to her that she might become "holy and blameless."

This means negatively, **YOU MUST GUARD AND PROTECT YOUR WIFE FROM EVIL.** When a man truly loves his wife, her purity is his supreme concern.

To you girls who are single, if a man says he loves you and then wants to compromise your sexual purity before you are married--he doesn't really love you. That kind of love defiles rather than purifies. It is not God's love. It is selfish, self-centered love, not a self-giving and serving love.

It means positively, **YOU MUST STRENGTHEN HER SPIRITUALLY**

The husband is responsible to take the initiative and provide Godly influences for his wife and children. This means the husband is the one who is primarily responsible before God for the spiritual development of his wife and children.

It is sad to see how this role is reversed in so many homes today. Too often the husband is neglecting his God-given responsibility to be the spiritual head of his home. If it were not for the wife in some cases, he would not be in church at all. If it were not for the wife, the children would have little or no spiritual instruction.

God wants men to be strong, loving, spiritual leaders in their homes. Too many men today are big shots at work but washouts and spiritual wimps in their homes-----content to delegate the responsibilities God has given them to their wives. We have a huge responsibility.

Question: "Is your wife more like Christ because she is married to you? Or is she like Christ in spite of you?"

One final way that husbands are to love their wives....

#### **IV. HUSBANDS ARE TO LOVE THEIR WIVES WITH A CARING LOVE (28-30)**

The husband who loves his wife as Christ loves the church will nourish and cherish her just as he nourishes and cherishes his own body--because that is how Christ cares for the church.

The Golden Rule of Matrimony is: You shall love your wife as yourself. And when you love here as yourself, you will be loving yourself because the two of you are one flesh.

This works out in a number of ways.

**FIRST**, loving your wife with a caring love demands that you be sensitive to her moods, her needs.

Several years ago the Saturday Evening Post carried an article entitled: "The Seven Ages of the Married Cold." It reveals how the husband's nurturing and caring for his wife so easily wanes with the passing of time. It went like this:

The first year: Sugar dumpling, I'm really worried about my baby girl. You've got a bad sniffle and there's no telling about these things with all this strep going around. I'm putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general checkup and a good rest. I know the food's lousy, but I'll be bringing your meals in from Rossini's. I've already got it all arranged with the floor superintendent.

The second year: Listen darling, I don't like the sound of that cough. I've called Doc Miller and asked him to rush over here. Now you go to bed like a good girl, please, just for Papa.

The third year: Maybe you'd better lie down, honey: nothing like a little rest when you feel lousy. I'll bring you something. Have you got any canned soup?

The fourth year: Now look, dear, be sensible. After you've fed the kids, washing the dishes, and finished the floors, you'd better lie down.

The fifth year: Why don't you take a couple of aspirin?

The sixth year: I wish you would gargle or something instead of sitting around all evening barking like a seal!

The seventh year: For Pete's sake, stop sneezing! Are you trying to give me pneumonia?

This is a funny look at a no so funny reality in many relationships. The decline of marriage as seen through the common cold.

SECOND, loving your wife with a caring love means being courteous.

This involves opening doors for her. Finding her a seat. Not because she is weaker, but because your courtesy towards your wife displays the gospel. It says I am seeking follow Christ as my model. It says, I love you as I do my own body.

### **CONCLUSION**

Husbands lets commit ourselves to following the example of Christ in our love for our wives. Lets commit ourselves to loving unconditionally, that they might experience the healing power of Christ's unconditional love through us. Lets commit ourselves to loving them sacrificially, with a dying to self kind of love that learns to set aside our own rights and preferences in order to meet the needs of our wives. Lets commit ourselves to loving our wives with a purifying love. A love that will motivate us to be strong, loving spiritual leaders in the home. Lets commit ourselves to loving our wives with a caring love that demonstrates a genuine sensitivity to their needs.

To love our wives in this way will mean we will have to cast ourselves completely and totally on the Lord Jesus Christ to give us the grace and power to love as He loved.

Jesus said: This is my commandment that you love one another just as I have loved you. Jesus Christ is the supreme model for the role of both husbands and wives. For wives, he is the model to you of submission to headship; for husbands, he is the model to you of loving leadership. When you follow in his steps you will know the fullness of not only marriage but life as God designed it.

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