The Husband of a Happy Wife

Ephesians 5:25-33

Introduction

The Bible teaches that marriages should last for a lifetime. And I believe they should get better and better every year. In fact, the day we marry our spouses should be the day we love them the least! Our love should grow deeper and deeper and we should find significant personal fulfillment in our marriages. But often, marriage can fall short of meeting our expectations. I believe there are several reasons for that. The overarching reason we can struggle in marriage is simply sin, which complicates God’s design for healthy marriages. In other words, through our own flesh, weaknesses and selfish attitudes we mess up what God really wants for us.

One reason marriage doesn’t live up to our expectations is that many of us entered into marriage believing in myths. What is a myth? A myth is a widely held but false belief or idea. There are 4 marriage myths that are dangerous to marriage.

* We expect the same things (unspoken rules and roles).
* Everything good gets better.
* Everything bad will go away.
* My spouse should make me whole.

Another reason marriage often can fall short of meeting our expectations is the fact that Satan (the world) has always been attacking Christian homes and marriages. Satan knows that if he can destroy our homes, he can do much spiritual damage to the next generation. Many of us here today, can personally testify to the scars of divorce. Satan has been offering men and women alternatives to God’s original plan such as cohabitation (shacking up), adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, incest and so forth.

And what our world teaches about the home and the marriage relationship is usually corrupt. Have you ever read the advice given by the so-called experts? It’s always changing and adapting because it never works for too long. When I read some of that advice in the advice column of the newspaper or online, it’s completely sad and depressing and void of any of God’s standards for relationships. The vast majority of it teaches one to be consumed with personal happiness and satisfaction and if your mate isn’t making you happy, well life’s too short, you better move on. Ever hear a discussion at the workplace about marriage and home-life? Sad, isn’t it?

And what really makes the marriage relationship difficult is the basic self-centered nature of mankind. It’s difficult if not impossible to maintain a good, lasting relationship with someone when you are selfish instead of loving.

So, as you can see, a lasting, good, God-honoring marriage is not just going to happen. **There is simply too much working against it. A great marriage requires work and a lot of it**! A great marriage does not simply depend upon finding Mr. or Mrs. Right, but by ***being*** Mr. or Mrs. Right, which means making Christ the center of your marriage and living by God’s standards on marriage and the home.

This morning, I will be focusing mainly on us husbands and future husbands that are here today or listening later online. I want to talk with you about the greatest thing you can do to make your relationship with your wife a lasting and joyful relationship. **In fact, I want to show you how you can be The Husband of a Happy Wife!** Paul has much more to say to men than to the ladies in this Ephesians 5:25-33 passage. That is because the husband is the key to a good home life. If you do your part, your wife will usually respond in a positive way, and you will most likely have a great marriage. I used to have a female co-worker who told me one time, “If I treat my husband like a king, then he will treat me like a queen.” At face value, that might seem a little self-serving but deep down I don’t think she meant it that way. It’s always been true that when we seek to meet the needs of others, ours are usually met too.

So turn with me to Ephesians 5:25-33 and let’s see what the husband’s responsibility is in the marriage relationship.

HUSBANDS: THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMAND FOR YOU IS TO **LOVE** YOUR WIFE.

I recently read the story of a pastor who was speaking to a 32 year old single woman. He started talking about her hopes for marriage. Then he asked, “What are some of the characteristics you’d like to find in your future spouse?” **Her first answer was, “ I want someone who loves me.”** It’s not surprising that the first command given to husbands in this passage is to love. Look at verse 25. *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”* This is a command. To fail at this is not only a sin against your wife, but it is a sin against God. And this command applies to all husbands as Paul points out in verse 33, *“Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife as himself…”.* No one is exempt from this command. Not in this passage, but in Titus 2:4, the wife is commanded to love her husband. It’s worth noting that the verse in Titus is the only time in the New Testament that a wife is commanded to love her husband. However, the husband is commanded to love his wife at least 3 times in this passage alone and one more time in Col. 3:19. Does God give women this command to love only once because they have a greater inclination to love than men? Perhaps, but besides that, I think there is another reason God commands husbands to love their wives.

**Love is Her Most Basic Personal Need**. We all, male and female alike, need to feel loved, needed, wanted and important. Essentially, we need to know that we matter. Christian psychologists tells us that the two most important psychological needs we *all* have is to be secure in knowing that we are loved, and to have a sense of significance, to feel our lives are worthwhile. However, which is the most important to the average woman? It is to be loved. Hers is a place of value. His is a place of respect. How do we as husbands show value? It’s simple really; we communicate value on the things on which we spend our time and money. Now, this is not to suggest that buying things for your wife will guarantee her happiness. That would be missing the point altogether. Value in a marriage relationship is not about material possessions. However, when we as husbands spend our time and money on things that are outside of the marriage relationship we are communicating to our wives that ‘whatever it is’ is what we value and truly love. Our wives appreciate us meeting their physical needs, but they also have personal needs that are far greater in meaning. And the greatest personal need of a woman is the security of being loved.

There is another reason you should focus your attention on loving your wife:

**Love is the Fulfillment of all Relational Laws – Galatians 5:13b-14** *“but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* This says the love is the fulfillment of God’s Law. Love is important to God. He says in His word in I Corinthians 13:2 that if we don’t have love, we are nothing. He continues in that same passage with, *“Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant*, *does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails…”*

Love will cause you to refrain from saying or doing anything that will hurt your wife. Love will cause you to do positive good toward your wife. Husbands, we may not need to go out and buy a book on marriage after all. All we have to do is follow this commandment to love our wives!

Now you may be thinking, well that sounds good, but how do I do it?

HOW TO OBEY THIS IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT

**Understand the Meaning of Love-** When the Bible uses the word love here in this passage, it’s not talking about sexual love (*eros*), though there is certainly a place for that in marriage. It’s not talking about friendship love (*philos*), though our wives should be our best friends. Rather, it uses what was an uncommon word at that time, but became very common in the New Testament. The Bible uses the Greek word *agape* in its verb form (*agapao*). Now to understand this kind of love, we first need to understand what it is not. We often confuse physical attraction, infatuation, lust and personal desire with love. For example, a person may say, “I love pizza.” This kind of love has nothing to do with caring and devotion and giving. What we mean is “I like the good feeling and satisfaction I get when I eat pizza.” Unfortunately, that is about the level of love some of us have when we get married. It goes something like this, “I love the feeling I get when I am around her” or “I think I have fallen in love with her”. This kind of love is really a self-centered kind of love and it’s certainly not the kind of love God has in mind in His Bible.

So what is *agape* love?

It is a love that is unselfish, that seeks not its own. Remember the passage I read from earlier in 1 Cor. 13. This kind of love is thoughtful and considerate. Such love gives and sacrifices.

It is unconditional. *Agape* love does not depend upon the loveliness or performance of the person loved. In fact, *agape* love requires us to make a purposeful decision to love the person to be loved. This is the Greek word that is used of God’s love for us. Romans 5:8 says, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* Therefore, it is not an emotion that requires that our wives always deserve our love. Unconditional means without conditions. It means loving even when our wives might not be very lovable at the moment. Our wives enjoy it when we are head over heals in love with them because of their character, appearance, personality, and accomplishments. But they also need the security of knowing that we will love them even when they mess up, or aren’t looking great, or when they are in a bad mood. We’re all entitled to a bad day or two.

Finally, this kind of love seeks to meet the needs of the person that we are showing love to. That doesn’t mean fulfilling her every desire, but it certainly does mean trying to fulfill her needs. We already know that one of our wives greatest needs is to *feel* loved. This involves telling her you love her with words, hugs, gifts, etc. Besides remembering birthdays, anniversaries, and holiday, we should surprise her with a card or some flowers for no special reason except that you love her. We should show our love by spending time with our wives, doing things together, and talking with each other, with the TV off by the way. We should show our love by giving her focused attention. This requires effort and has to be purposeful.

We should also really want to connect with our wives.

* Let her know that you want to **understand how she feels.** Ask her opinion.
* Handle her with **tenderness** and care in every way.
* Don’t fix it. Don’t always try to be The Great Fixer. Listen and Empathize.

We’re starting to get a better understanding of how to love our wives but let’s go further. The Bible gives us an illustration of the kind of love we are to have for our wives.

**Love Your Wife as Christ Loved the Church-** In v. 25, the Bible says, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church…”* The love of Christ for the Church is the pattern we are to follow in expressing love for our wives. Obviously, we can’t love our wives as much as Christ loved the Church and we can’t love them as much as Jesus loves them still, but we can love our wives with the same kind of love. In other words, we may not have the ocean, but we can have a little of it in our bucket. So what kind of love did Christ have for us, the Church? He teaches us to have:

1. Sacrificial, Giving Love- Notice in the last of v. 25 that Christ so loved the Church that He “gave Himself for her.” Christ loved us enough to leave heaven, come to earth to take on human form, to be spit on and mocked, to be abused, to be crowned with a crown of thorns, to be nailed to a cross, and to have a spear thrust into His side. No sacrifice was too great for Christ to make on behalf of His bride, the Church. And the fact that His love is seen primarily in His sacrificial death for our salvation is seen in the tense of the verb here. Note that Paul did not say, “as Christ *loves* the church,” but “as Christ *loved* the church.” He is just using the past tense because he is thinking about the past great act of love: His sacrificial death.

So we should follow the example of Christ and love our wives sacrificially. Do you have this kind of love for your wife? When is the last time you made a sacrifice for your wife? Do you work hard to provide for your wife? Do you ever sacrifice your time? Occasionally giving up a game of golf to go shopping with your wife is a sacrifice! Would you be willing to die for your wife?

Furthermore, Christ teaches us to have a:

1. Purifying Love- In v. 26 we read, *“that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word*.*”* This verse teaches that Christ loved the church so much that He wanted not only to save us from the penalty of sin and death but wanted also to sanctify and cleanse us from all impurity. This teaching applies to us as husbands. Christ is commanding that it is our responsibility as husbands to seek the well being of our wives. If we truly love our wives with an agape love then we will do everything in our power to maintain her holiness, her virtue, her righteousness, and her purity. Let’s read v. 27, *“that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.”* We should not lead our wives into sin, or into a situation that would cause her to sin. On the contrary, we should be leading our wives to be more like Jesus Christ. That means she needs to see Jesus in me. This is a big-time responsibility.
2. A Communicating Love- This is not specifically mentioned here in this text, but it is clear in Scripture that Jesus communicated His love for us, the Church. Jesus demonstrated His love for us through His sacrifice, but He also clearly communicated His love for by His words. For example in John 13:34, He said, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you…”* So, we need to tell our wives that we love them, and we should do it often! A few years ago, Nancy Reagan published a book titled, “I Love You, Ronnie- The Letters of Ronald Reagan to Nancy Reagan.” I have read this book and the expressed, communicated love that is shared to the reader is simply remarkable. As President, Ronald Reagan was known as The Great Communicator and these letters provide us husbands with some great insight into how to communicate love to our wives. I want to share a few with you. The first is from Valentine’s Day, 1977.

*Dear St. Valentine,*

*I’m writing to you about a beautiful young lady who has been in this household for 25 years now-come March 4th.*

*I have a request to make of you but before doing so feel you should know more about her. For one thing she has 2 hearts-her own and mine. I’m not complaining. I gave her mine willingly and like it right where it is. Her name is Nancy but for some time now I’ve called her Mommie and don’t believe I could change.*

*My request of you is-could you on this day whisper in her ear that someone loves her very much and more and more each day? Also tell her, this “someone” would run down like a dollar clock without her so she must always stay where she is.*

*Then tell her if she wants to know who that “someone” is to just turn her head to the left. I’ll be across the room waiting to see if you told her. If you’ll do this for me, I’ll be very happy knowing that she knows I love her with all my heart.*

*Thank you,*

*“Someone”*

On another occasion our 40th president, left a simple note for his wife on White House stationary that read:

*I love you*

*I love you*

*I love you*

*I love you*

*I love you*

*I love you*

*I love you*

*I love you*

*I love you*

*And besides that-*

*I love you*

And finally, in a response to a note left for him by Nancy that read *“I love you- ITWWW”*, he replied, *“A woman left this for me on my desk. I guess you might as well know-I’m in love with her.”*

I suspect that even the hardest of hearts would melt with that kind of expressed love!

**Love Your Wife as Your Own Body-** In v.28 the Bible says, *“So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself…”*

Also in v.33, the Bible says, *“Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife as himself…”* Such self-love is not wrong. It is the natural law of life. The Bible is teaching that we should love our wives at least as much as ourselves, if not more! Let’s look again at the end of v.28, *“He who loves his own wife loves himself…”* Why is that? Well, in v.31, the passage quotes from Genesis 2:24, which says that in marriage, *“the two shall become one flesh.”* A man should love his wife because she *is* a part of his body. Husband, your wife is one with you. She is an extension of your own body in a real sense. The same thing is true spiritually in the relationship between the Church and Christ. V. 30 says, *“For we are members of His body.”* That echoes Gen 2:23.

What does this mean? We spend a lot of time on our bodies. We should exercise to keep our bodies in shape. We should eat the right kinds of foods. We keep our bodies warm in the winter, and cool in the summer. We protect our bodies from harm, don’t we? When our bodies have needs, we do whatever it takes to meet those needs, don’t we? So just like that, we need to meet the needs of our wives.

To not meet the needs of our wives is to bring harm on ourselves. Destroying our marriages is destroying part of ourselves. Men, if we abuse our bodies, and fail to meet the needs of our bodies, the quality of our lives will be affected. And if we fail to meet the needs of our wives, the quality of our lives will certainly be affected. As we’ve all heard, “if momma ain’t happy, nobody is happy.” So for our own sake, as well as for our wives sake, love your wife!

How then should we love our wives? The Bible tells us the answer in v.29, *“for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church…”* So we should love our wives:

1. By Nourishing Her- This word (ektrepho) means to nourish or feed and was primarily used in nourishing and bringing up children. When a man is hungry, he will feed his flesh. Amen? A good feeling follows the act of nourishing. In addition to meeting the physical needs of our wives, we are to do things in our marriage relationship that feed and nourish our love for one another.
2. By Cherishing Her- Here again, this word (thalpo) was used primarily of a parent/child relationship. It means to warm and to cherish as a mother does an infant in her bosom. Even so, we are to cherish our wives, making sure her emotional needs are met. We should give our wives a lot of hugging and affection. Dr. Willard Harley, in his excellent book, *His Needs, Her Needs,* outlines the top five needs in marriage for husbands and wives. Based on his research, he lists affection as the #1 need of a wife. So cherish your wife!
3. By Commitment to Her- We’ve already looked at v.31- where Paul quotes from Genesis, *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”* God’s idea for marriage is that it is to be permanent. That’s what cleaving means. Some translations use the word “joined”. I like the word “cleave” better because I believe it depicts the idea of permanence more strongly. The two become one flesh is this picture of two individual parts that become one. Men, you wife is to be as much a part of you as you arm or leg. Just as the Bible teaches in Romans 8:35-39 that nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ, your wife needs the security of knowing that nothing will separate her from your love.

I have another story from Reader’s Digest I’d like to share. It’s about a nurse and an elderly gentleman in his 80’s. This elderly man arrived at 8:30 to have some stitches removed from his thumb. He told the nurse he was in a hurry as he had an appointment at 9am. She took his vital signs and had him take a seat, knowing it would be over an hour before someone would be able to see him. She saw him looking at his watch and decided, since she was not busy with another patient, she would evaluate his wound. On exam, it was well healed, so she talked to one of the doctors, got the needed supplies to remove his sutures and redress his wound.

While taking care of his wound, they began to engage in conversation. She asked him if he had another doctor’s appointment that morning, as he was in such a hurry. The gentleman told her no, that he needed to go to the nursing home and have breakfast with his wife. She then inquired as to her health. He told her that his wife had been there for a while and that she was the victim of Alzheimer’s disease. As they talked, she asked if she would be worried if he was a bit late. He replied that she no longer knew who he was, that she had not recognized him in five years now. She was surprised, and asked him. *“And you still go every morning, even though she doesn’t know who you are?”* He smiled as he patted her hand and said. *“She doesn’t know me, but I still know who she is.”*

CONCLUSION: Men, we have talked today about the kind of love we are to have for our wives. We are to have *agape* love, a love that is unselfish, that meets needs. We are to love our wives like Christ loved the Church, with a sacrificial, purifying love. What a great example! And we are to love our own wives as our own bodies. That means that we will nourish and cherish our wives. We will have an unconditional commitment to keep our wives, as we keep the own members of our own bodies.

You say, *“How can I love like that?”* This kind of love comes from God. I John 4:7 says *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and every one who loves is born of God and knows God.”* Romans 5:5 tells us that the Holy Spirit gives the Christian the ability to express this kind of love. So if we are going to be able to obey the command in v. 25 , to love our wives, we must first obey the command in v.18, *“but be filled with the Spirit.”* We need the filling of the God’s Spirit in us and then we will manifest the fruits of the Spirit, which in includes love! (Gal. 5:22) So for us to love our wives they the need to be loved and the way God tells us to love them we must love Him first.

If you aren’t sure the Holy Spirit is in you, then the first step you need to take is to trust Christ as your Savior, and thus receive the Holy Spirit. If you need to be saved, will you trust Christ as your Savior today? If you are already a Christian, will you trust in the Lord to grant you the filling of the Holy Spirit? Will you make a commitment today to love your wife as Christ loves the Church?

**EQUAL PARTNERS DESIGNED FOR ONE ANOTHER**

* Gen. 1:26-28- Adam & Eve were created in the image of God as equal partners in the management of God’s creation.
* Gen. 2:18-20- Eve was created to complete Adam, not to compete with Adam.
* Gen.2:21-23- Eve was Adam’s created bride.
* Gen. 2:24-25- Marriage is biblical. Marriage is a priority and it is permanent. The man “leaves” so he can “cleave” to his wife. It is a special union (one flesh) v. 24. It is also a shameless union (not ashamed) v.25.