

Ephesians 5:25-32

Ephesians
How To Be The Husband She's Always Wanted

Walter Chellberg, writing in American Heritage Magazine, said he was exploring a local cemetery, reading some of the epitaphs when he discovered this one. It read "She lived with her husband 50 years and died in a confident hope of a better life."

Rodney Dangerfield said, "My wife and I were happy for twenty years. Then we met."

All kidding aside, struggling in a marriage is no laughing matter. In fact, a contentious marriage is one of the most emotionally painful human experiences.

Why is that? Why are guy / girl relationships such a struggle for us? Isn't falling in love, getting married, raising kids just doing what comes naturally?

Two weeks ago we started a series on relationships and so far we've tried to understand God's design for men and women. One of the things we've seen as we've investigated is where this attraction, as well as the difficulties, come from.

Last week we went to the divine handbook for life, the Bible, and looked at the book of Genesis.

Interestingly, we use Greek names for the Hebrew books of the Old Testament and Genesis means "origin" or "beginning" in Greek. The Hebrew title for the book is *bireshith* which means "In The Beginning."

So if you want to know where things originated, Genesis is the place to look.

In Genesis we're told that God created man, said, "It is not good for man to be alone," and then made Eve and brought her to Adam.

Each one was exactly what the other needed for companionship and intimacy. Then we saw that the New Testament refers to Genesis when it discusses marriage.

The attraction between men and women, the joining in marriage, and the resulting relationship are all part of God's design.

But then we saw something else in Genesis. Both the man and woman chose to act

independently. First the woman acted independently of her husband and ate the fruit and then Adam acted independently of God and ate too.

Suddenly the innocent couple was no longer innocent. Suddenly the beauty of their relationship was distorted by sin.

Well, here we are today still reeling from the effects of that sin. We're born into the world as sinners. We sin by nature and by choice. And that sin has damaged and distorted all of our relationships, especially the closest ones; marriage, family. What's the answer? Where can we go for help when it comes to relationships?

I'd like you to open your Bibles to **Ephesians chapter 5, page 1041**

Ephesians chapter 5 is one of those amazing passage of Scripture that has so much packed into it, that's so important for us to understand.

This is God's specific direction to the family. Remember, God's truth cuts across all lines, cultural, historical, societal.

So often people want to conveniently ignore the parts of the Bible they don't like. One of the ways they do that is by dismissing biblical teaching as just applying to the culture of the people it was written to.

Obviously one of the important rules of biblical interpretation is study the culture. In a few weeks we'll be going over a passage that talks about slaves and masters. To understand those verses it's obvious that we're going to have to pull out some background information on 1st century slavery.

But the one thing we're not going to do is skip over it and say there's nothing there for me to learn. There's going to be all kinds of spiritual truth we're going to find is directly applicable to us.

So culture is important. But what's fascinating to me is these husband/wife passages use theological arguments, not cultural ones.

Let me show you what I mean. **Read vs 21**

This verse is kind of our home base for this series. This is where we get the underlying truth to build everything else on.

The heartbeat of God is that we submit to one another in the fear of God. That's not cultural. It went against 1st century culture and it goes against 21st century culture.

It's about thinking and acting like Jesus Christ. That's not cultural, it's just plain old biblical.

Our model for life is the Creator of the universe. He voluntarily humbled Himself to be our Savior. He voluntarily became one of us and then stood in our place at the cross.

The Bible says *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.* I Peter 3:18

The Lord Jesus Christ did that so that whosoever will may come. So that we who believe will be forgiven and free.

Then God calls us to have that same mentality that Jesus had. We should have a servant's heart.

The verses that come next tell us how to apply verse 21. Last week we saw the challenge to the wives to submit to their husbands' leadership.

This week we want to look at the guys. This week it's how to be the husband she's always wanted.

As I listen to people's reactions to Ephesians 5 I think one of the sticking points is that it tells wives to submit to their husbands but it doesn't specifically say husbands submit to your wives.

So the usual response is, that's not fair, it's male domination and sexism, it doesn't apply to us today.

I would say two things to that. First, you need to get the CD from last week or listen on the web site to get a fuller picture of what God's telling wives to do. We really spent some time developing that thought.

Second, this is "submitting to one another." So whether Ephesians uses the word "submit" or not with the husbands, it's obvious that he has to submit too.

So let's take a look and see just what it is that God says is the husband's responsibilities in marriage.

This is practical stuff for all of us, married or not, because it's teaching us to look at life God's way.

I. A Husband's Love For His Wife Is To Be Patterned After Christ's Love For His Church

You'd think that Paul, the author of this New Testament letter, being the misogynist he's often accused of being, would follow up telling wives to submit to their husbands by telling the husbands to make sure they force their wife to submit.

Instead this is what we get. **Read vs 25**

No wonder God says in Isaiah 55, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.* Isa 55:8-9

Women weren't real high on the priority list in the first century.

There were Jewish Rabbis who started every day with the prayer "Thank you Lord for not making me a gentile, a slave or a woman."

In Deuteronomy, Moses wrote that if a man finds some uncleanness in his wife he could divorce her. For centuries the Rabbis argued about what that meant.

By the time of Christ Rabbi Hillel said the uncleanness was whatever the husband defined it as. If he found another woman he liked better he could divorce his wife. That was the prevailing teaching.

Rabbi Shammi said the uncleanness referred to sexual immorality only.

To show you how bad where things were at during that time in Matthew 19 Jesus sides with Shammi. He says sexual immorality is the only reason that divorce would be permitted. Not commanded, but permitted.

And His disciples respond this way, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." Man, if marriage is that binding it's better not to get married in the first place.

That was the Jewish world. The Gentile world was no better.

The Roman philosopher Seneca writes that women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married. He said that women dated the years by the names of their husbands.

Jerome, who lived after the time of Christ, said that in Rome there was a woman who was married to her twenty-third husband and she herself was his twenty-first wife.

We're always complaining about how bad things are getting. Those were the "Good Old Days, " right?

In the context of all that confusion and sin comes this command: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church.*

Think about all that implies. In verse 24 a wife was given a high standard.

Read vs 24

That's a beautiful comparison but think about it, the church is always imperfect in it's submission. So the example that the wife is to follow is often less than perfect.

The church does fail Jesus Christ at times but Jesus Christ never fails His church. His love is always perfect in every detail. His love is totally and unreservedly given.

Now look at this. *Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church.* That's the example that husbands are given to follow.

There's no ifs ands or buts. There's no paragraph b, subsection 3 to get you out of your responsibility, it's just do it.

Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. That's almost enough to make a guy shout out to God, "Wait a minute. Have you forgotten who you're talking to down here? It's just me down here God. Remember stumbling, vacillating, human as they get me?"

In fact, if we're not careful we might be tempted to just write this off as some

flowery language that sounds good on paper but has nothing to do with where we really live.

Love your wife just as Christ also loved the church. Sounds impossible.

But remember, God would never tell us to do what we can't do. All that would lead to is frustration. We'd give up quick.

So what's the solution? Let's look at verse 25 again. **Read vs 25**

This isn't about quantity or even quality of love.

God's love for us is infinite. As human beings we don't have the capacity to show infinite love.

What verse 25 is really saying is "Husbands love your wives the same way that Christ loved the church. Love by giving."

There are so many implications to God telling husbands to love their wives.

For one thing it shows that love is a whole lot more than a feeling. We tend to define love strictly on terms of feeling, don't we? We talk about falling in and out of love. Love at first sight. Those all have to do with feelings and infatuation.

Now feelings aren't bad. They're created by God and God wants us to experience feelings. He just doesn't want us to let our feelings run our lives.

It's interesting that this verse says the way we love is the way Christ loved, and the way Christ loved was by giving Himself.

There are 3 words for "love" in Koine Greek, which was the Greek the New Testament was written in. The one that God used here really clarifies what this love is all about.

One is a word that's never used in the New Testament is the word eros. It's where we get our word "erotic" from and it means "a physical attraction."

There's nothing wrong with erotic love, in fact it's designed by God as an important part of the relationship of a husband and wife. Read the Song of Solomon and you'll

see that God is really big on erotic love.

A husband isn't commanded to have an eros type of love for his wife because we can't just produce a physical attraction for another person. God's not going to say, "husbands be physically attracted to your wives," because a husband can't just flip a switch and produce that attraction.

A second word, and one that's used 48 times in its verb and noun form, is *phileo*. You can hear *phileo* in our words like philanthropist and Philadelphia. The noun form is always translated by the word "friend" in the New Testament. It means "to be fond of someone."

Again, while that's certainly an important part of a marriage relationship, we can't just produce feelings of friendship. God's not going to say, "husbands be fondly attracted to your wives," because a husband can't just flip a switch and produce that kind of attraction either.

The key to understanding the main responsibility of a husband is found in the word that God does use in verse 25. It's the Greek verb *agapao*. It's used 215 times in its noun and verb forms.

The way you figure what a word means is to see how it's used.

Let's try that with *agapao* and see what we come up with. Listen to these verses that use the word. See if you can pick up on the meaning.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world He gave*

John 3:25 *The Father has loved the Son and has given all things into His hand*

Galatians 2:20 *I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me*

Ephesians 5:25 *Christ loved the church and gave Himself for us*

II Thessalonians 2:16 *God our Father has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation*

I John 4:10 *He loved us and sent His Son*

Here's your chance to be a Greek scholar this morning. What is the main characteristic of *agapao* in those verses?

Love gives. This love gives and, this is so important, it has nothing to do with how attractive the one receiving the love is.

God so loved the world. Was the world physically attractive to God? Of course not.

Was God fond of the people who had sinned against Him? Not at all.

The people of the world are described as the enemy of God. The people of the world didn't go looking for God. They ran from God and went into atheism or made up gods of their own.

Agapao has nothing to do with attraction or feeling. It's all about giving. This kind of love is characterized by giving. It's self-sacrificing and it's an action we can do.

There's an online blog for Asians called Kawii Nation. And that blog has a section to discuss questions of love and marriage. These are people who are coming from cultures that have arranged marriages or, at the least, unique cultural expectations.

And in the middle of this long thread of posts someone quotes the Lyrics from a Don Francisco song from the 70's.

*So you say you can't take it, the price is too high.
The feelings are gone it seems the rivers run dry.
You never imagined it could turn out so rough.
You give and give and give and still it's never enough.
Your emotions have vanished that once held a thrill,
you wonder if love could be alive in you still.
But that ring on your finger was put there to stay,
you'll never forget the words you promised that day.
Jesus didn't die for you because it was fun,
He hung there for love because it had to be done,
and in spite of the anguish his word was fulfilled,
cause love is not a feeling it's an act of the will.*

The next post says in broken English, "I am not Christian and I do not know Don Francisco but I understand this song lyrics! this is what I am saying so many times! Feeling of love, this emotion is nature tells you which person you should pay attention to right now! but pay attention to any person for life is deliberate action, this is true loving action."

That's the kind of love that makes a husband the kind of husband his wife's always wanted.

This is a love that acts, meets needs, doesn't seek it's own agenda, gives, invests, sacrifices.

Look what else this kind of love does. **Read vs 26-27**

Jesus' love is a giving love but it is a love with a purpose. This isn't, "Husbands love your wives so they'll give you what you want or treat you the way you want."

Jesus Christ died for us so that He might cleanse us from our sins.

Love is giving yourself for another person's good and the greatest good you could seek is their spiritual purity.

I know we don't always think this way guys, but God is saying that our responsibility is to encourage our wives in their spiritual life.

According to God husbands have a high calling that goes beyond making a couple of bucks and mowing the grass. The husband is to make provision for the sanctification of his wife.

That means you'll never put her in a compromising situation. You don't tell her to answer the phone and say you're not there. You don't push and push until she loses it and flies off the handle. You don't encourage her to watch movies or videos that make her feel uncomfortable.

The goal of God's kind of husband is to see his wife grow spiritually and emotionally as a person.

A husband who takes God's design for marriage seriously never takes his wife's relationship to God for granted.

It's really tempting for guys to say, "Wait a minute, I've got enough trouble with my own spiritual life, let alone worrying about hers."

Other husbands might say, "My wife's a whole lot closer to God than I am. How can I help her grow?"

Well, last week we saw that God gave direction to the wives without exception. The same things true here.

Husbands need to grow. Husbands need to learn. But husbands need to make sure

that their home is a place that's conducive to spiritual growth for the rest of the family.

He isn't responsible for their growth, but he's responsible for providing the context for that growth to take place.

But now notice, God doesn't even stop there. If a husband's love for his wife is to be patterned after Christ's love for his church then he'll love his wife as he loves himself.

I. A Husband's Love For His Wife Is To Be Patterned After Christ's Love For His Church

II. A Husband's Love For His Wife Is To Be Based On Oneness With His Wife

Read vs 28

Here's the question. How do men love their own bodies? They do it by taking care of their bodies and meeting their bodies needs.

You work out, play racquet ball, eat satisfying food, put the right clothes on to keep yourself warm in the winter. You even use Irish Spring and Scope so you'll smell good.

So what does all this have to do with a husband loving his wife?

Read vs 31

Verse 31 is a direct quote from Genesis 2:24. We looked at it last week when we saw the origins of marriage and relationships. It's Moses' comment on the union of Adam and Eve as husband and wife.

Marriage is an intimate joining of two people that's so personal that God says they're "one flesh." This is the most intimate human relationship possible.

That's why Ephesians says, *He that loves his wife loves himself.*

It always amazes me when a couple comes for counseling and you ask "What's the problem?" the guy says, "What problem? I don't have a problem. It's my wife that has the problem. Not me. I just came along to make her happy."

That, right there, is an impossible situation.

It's like me getting the flu and my feet saying, "Oh, we don't have a problem. The head and the stomach have a problem. We're doing fine down here."

Your body doesn't do that because all the parts are interrelated. And there's no one sided problems in a marriage because the husband and wife are one.

But you say, "Wait a minute Ed, you don't know my wife!"

You're right. I don't know your wife like you do but, let me ask you this. Are there things about your body that you don't like? I've got some of those things.

For most of my life I could eat what I wanted and I never gained a pound. I used to buy my clothes in the boys section because they were cheaper.

Then I hit a certain age and my clothes started shrinking around the waist. I do a hundred or so sit ups every day. I actually have six-pack abs now. The problem is they're covered by my belly!

But let me tell you, I still keep my body warm and feed it stuff it likes. You probably have things about your body you wish you could change but you still meet your body's needs.

You don't demand perfection of your body before you take care of it.

The same goes for our wives. Who are we to neglect our wives physical, emotional, and spiritual needs? When we love our wives we're loving ourselves.

We're not to demand some kind of artificial perfection from them and excuse ourselves by saying, "When my wife is everything I think she should be, then I'll love her!"

This isn't about what she's supposed to be doing. It's about you. It's about me.

Look at the explanation in verse 29 (Read)

The word translated "nourish" literally means "to feed." it was only used one other place in the New Testament but outside the Bible there's an example from early in the first century where a woman writes, "I have made the agreement and I will

nurse the infant.”

The word translated “nurse” is the same word translated “nourish” in verse 29.

The word translated “cherish” literally means “to keep warm.” It’s the same word used in I Thessalonians 2:7 where Paul writes, *we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.*

The Greeks used it outside the Bible to mean “to cuddle.”

A wife should feel secure, cared for, and nurtured by her husband. That’s not always a “guy thing” is it? That’s usually what we think of the woman providing to the relationship.

God says, “Husbands, it’s *your* job to be tender, affectionate, and compassionate with your wife.”

The Lord’s that way with you. Now you be that way with your wife.

Then finally look where God directs us. **Read vs 30-32**

The word translated “mystery” doesn’t mean something hard to understand. It means something that was once hidden but now is revealed.

God is saying, “Let’s be clear. My Son is the bridegroom and the church is the bride.”

Our relation to Jesus isn’t just a devotee and deity kind of thing .

Through faith the Bible says we were one with Jesus Christ. We share in His eternal life.

Here’s how Jesus loved His bride. He left the splendors of heaven, He locked Himself in time and space, He took on the frailty of human flesh, He humbled Himself, He made Himself of no reputation, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That’s how He loved the church.

He’s our example. How can we fail to love when He never fails. We may be a lot of things (some of them aren’t too pretty) but in Christ we’re never unloved.

Video: *I Have Never Been Unloved* Igniter Media