

Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## The Duty of Husbands

### *Biblical Marriage Part 5*

Many years ago the Saturday Evening Post carried an article entitled, *The Seven Ages of the Married Cold*.<sup>1</sup> The article chronicled the waning love of a newly married man for his wife. While most of you are probably familiar with this article, let me quote it in full on account of its timeless message.

“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, washed 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 just 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?’”

Just as a person can abandon their love for Christ<sup>2</sup> a church can neglect its love for one another.<sup>3</sup> We can abandon our love for the world.<sup>4</sup> So also it is possible for a married man to forsake his love for his wife — and so Paul exhorts the man three times in just nine verses. “Husbands, love your wives” (Ephesians 5:25).

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from Dr. John MacArthur’s *The Family*, page 61

<sup>2</sup> Compare Matthew 24:12 and Revelation 2:3

<sup>3</sup> Compare 1 Peter 2:22

<sup>4</sup> Compare Romans 14:14

“So husbands ought also to love their own wives” (Ephesians 5:28). “Nevertheless, let each individual among you also love his own wife” (Ephesians 5:33).

## Love: Man’s Call in Marriage

In our society today, it could be better stated that love is the unfulfilled call of the man in marriage. With the deterioration of the family, the wholesale abandonment of God’s plan for marriage on the part of many in our society, the increasing number of fatherless homes and the alarming rate of infidelity, abortion, and divorce it is becoming quite apparent that almost everything is going on in the home today — everything EXCEPT love!

This is why I believe that there is no more important passage for the men in our generation than this text before us. Because God is the author of marriage He gives us HIS plan for what constitutes a Biblical, healthy marriage relationship. Part of God’s plan for a Biblical marriage is that the husband love the wife.\

Ephesians 5:25, “**Husbands, love<sup>5</sup> your wives**, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

This constitutes the essences of the man’s responsibility in marriage —love! Now amazingly, this is perhaps one of the most non-controversial verses in this passage (and probably in the whole Bible). The verse that says that the wife is to submit to her husband is offensive to the modern ear. The fact that marriage is somehow tied to “Christ’s death” on the cross<sup>6</sup> is folly to our generation. Many wonder how a man’s death 2,000 years ago could affect marriage. But the truth that the husband is to love his wife somehow agrees with our sense of what constitutes a good marriage. Indeed, our society likes the teaching of Ephesians 5:25 until they discover what this passage really means.

When we understand this passage as God intended, we find that this command is far from the love relationship sought after by most in our day. Rather it is the most exacting command in this passage. This command is the most frequently violated in marriages today. It in fact is a requirement that is most difficult to fulfill.

This passage’s call to love does not refer to the romantic love or companion love sought after by many in our day. Rather, it is the love from which we view the cross.

Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, **even as Christ also loved<sup>7</sup> the church**, and gave himself for it.”

Notice that Paul does not say “as Christ loves the church” but “loved the church.” The term *loved* points to an act of love in time, a moment in history. The rest of the passage tells us when that occurred.

Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, **and gave himself for it.**”

The love referenced in this text is the love seen at the cross. Husbands are to love their wives JUST AS Christ loved the church. Husbands are to love with the same KIND of love that Christ has for His bride! In other words the standard of a husband’s love is infinitely high! It is not like our concept of love.

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<sup>5</sup> αγαπαω agapao

<sup>6</sup> Compare Ephesians 5:25-31

<sup>7</sup> αγαπαω agapao

It is not a love that merely respects the other person. It is not a just a love that makes allowances so that one another can do their own thing. It is not a love that is a passionate longing that issues forth in intimacy and romance. This is what the world means by a loving relationship. RATHER, it is the love demonstrated by God at the Cross!

Husbands are to “love their wives just as Christ loved the Church.”

Yet notice, Paul is not talking about the FULLNESS of the capacity of divine love. Rather he writes, “even as” which references the KIND of love that Christ manifested. (Quality not Quantity)!

## **What Kind of Love?**

What is the KIND of love is a man to love his wife?

Notice the BACKGROUND of this text — specifically the nature of Christ's love for the church.

Romans 1:21, “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

This passage speaks of mankind in general and Adam in particular. When Adam and Eve were created they walked with God in the Garden of Eden. They enjoyed fellowship with God. They enjoyed a love relationship with God. But Adam turned his back on God. Far from honoring God or giving Him thanks Adam and Eve deliberately rebelled against God by eating of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Romans 1:22-23, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”

Man is in a state of cosmic rebellion against God. Man has refused God’s word. Man has rejected God’s authority. Man has renounced God’s glory. This is the picture of the nations in Scripture. They are not out groping to find God as best as they know how. Rather they hate God<sup>8</sup> and have rejected his authority and have refused to obey God. Therefore mankind justly lies under the wrath and curse of God.<sup>9</sup>

Now, in view of this setting notice the sacrifice God made in order to save rebellious man from His wrath.

## **Christ’s Sacrifice**

2 Corinthians 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”<sup>10</sup>

This is a description of the cross of Jesus Christ. Though we were in a state of rebellion and thus under the sentence of death God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place!

This is what the cross was all about. The Righteous died for the unrighteous. The Pure died for the impure. The Worthy died for the unworthy.

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<sup>8</sup> Compare Proverbs 14:1

<sup>9</sup> Compare Romans 1:18

<sup>10</sup> This verse could be rendered this way: “For he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we who knew no righteousness might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Now, what does this tell us about the Love of Christ?

Romans 5:6-8, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Man’s standard of love is that some will die for a “good” man like the President. But notice that Christ’s standard was that He died for the basest of sinners. What a dramatic demonstration of the character of God’s Love. Christ standard far exceeds man’s wretched state and weak standard of love.

Here we catch a glimpse into the Love of God. Christ did not forfeit His life for a righteous or a good people. Christ died for helpless, ungodly, rebellious sinners! And yet, this is but half of it. For it wasn’t that we were ready to mend our ways if God would just help us a bit. Neither was it that we were willing to change if only He died for us. It wasn’t even that in spite of our sin, we nevertheless had some virtue in us or some hope. Rather it was that while we were in a state of rebellion against God – verse 6 says “STILL SINNERS” verse 8 says “YET SINNERS” — Christ came for us. While we hated God and everything associated with Him; Christ died for us! While we justly deserved the wrath and curse of God, God loved us — knowing full well that even after He saved us we would still disobey!

This is the love of God for His people!

## **The Thrown Away Child**

Ezekiel 16:1-9, “Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,  
2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,  
3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.  
4 And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.  
5 None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.  
6 ¶ And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.  
7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.  
8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.  
9 Then washed I thee with water; yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.”

Our world knows nothing of this Love! God’s love is a love for the utterly unworthy. It is a love for one who could never repay. It is a self-sacrificing, uncompromising love. It is a love not conditioned by the character of the one loved. It is a love expressed at the expense of self! It is a love defined by the cross!

This is the background of the call given in Ephesians 5 for the husband to love. Husbands are called to love their wives AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH and DIED. This means that the call of the man in marriage is to love his wife unconditionally. He is to love his wife with no thought as to what he might get. He is to love her regardless of the relative merit of his wife. What the wife does or has done is not the basis

of his love. He does not consider what this love will cost him.

There are two characteristics arising from these definitions about love. Love involves self-sacrifice. Love is expressed toward unworthy recipients.

This is the call of the Husband in marriage: Loving one's wife regardless of who she is! Or what she has done! Or what it costs! It is a call of the pastor husband.

Now Brothers and Sisters, we quickly confess that no human being has the capacity to love with the divine fullness and perfection with which Christ loves the church. However we also confess that if a man is in Christ—he has been saved by the cross-work of Christ—and is filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit and willingly submits his wants and desires to Christ he will begin to love like Christ. If the prerequisites of this passage are characteristic of a husband in a marriage God will provide for the husband to love his wife with a measure of the TYPE of love that Christ has for His church! And thus, there could never come a time when a man redeemed by the cross of Christ could offer an excuse for not loving his wife like this.

## **The Bad Wife**

What about the ungrateful wife? What about the unfaithful wife? What about the godless and wicked wife? What about the wife who does not support me? What about the wife who discourages me? What about the wife who loathes me? What about a marriage in which the wife turns out to be not who the husband thought she was when he married her? Is the man still bound to love her?

Indeed!

A common practice among the Jews of Paul's day was the seclusion of unmarried young women. As such, it was possible that a bridegroom could not only be a stranger to the temper and manners of his bride but he could even be a stranger to the features of her face! And thus, on the wedding night it is not unthinkable that a husband could be disappointed with who he had married. Undoubtedly many said, "She's not what I was expecting."

And yet- Mark It!- ALL MEN regardless of who they obtained as a bride or the magnitude of the disappointment that they felt or the strengths and weaknesses of his wife were not beyond the call of this text—they too must love their wife!

And we are different?

We too have no excuse for not loving our wives! In fact as we have stressed the pattern that lies behind this text (the Covenant Community), and have seen the God-ordained position that the husband holds in marriage—the position of shepherd—we must conclude that NOT only does a man have no excuse for not loving his wife. We must say that to not love his wife is to prove himself an unfaithful shepherd of God's sheep!

## **The Unfaithful Shepherd**

Listen to a passage about the unfaithful husband.

Ezekiel 34:2-6, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye

bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

5 And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.”

Show me a relationship in which the man thinks that marriage is a means of gain for himself — i.e., his wife and family are there to serve him after a long day of work — where a man feeds himself and not his wife (whether physically, spiritually, emotionally) and abused his wife in any form and I will show you a man not fulfilling his God-ordained call in marriage!

There is no question that all of us have fallen short this.

Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, even **as Christ also loved the church**, and gave himself for it.”

Once again we therefore must be reminded of this exhortation. Though we fall so short, nevertheless the assurance remains: Christ Loves Me!

The basis for my acceptance before God is not what I do or how well I do it. But my acceptance before God is based solely upon what Christ has done on my behalf. And so as one's who are righteous in God's sight, let us in gratitude excel in our love for one another. And as husbands, let us strive all the more diligently to fulfill the call to love/shepherd our wives!

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### **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on November 9, 2003. Greg is the preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.