



Ephesians

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So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. Ephesians 5:28

There is debate as to what the word “so” is referring to. Is it speaking of that which is before, or that which follows? The answer is, “To that which is before.” To understand, the entire thought must be presented (note the underlining) –

“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. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own 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 the Lord *does* the church.”

The intervening verses were an explanation of how Christ loved the church, and they were also an explanation of what the result of that love would be. With the example given, the admonition with its explanation then follows.

Christ loved the church so much that He gave Himself for her. This is something one would do as if their own body. So the husband is to do for his wife, because the wife is truly one flesh with him (see Genesis 2:23). The pattern was set at the beginning and it should, naturally, follow through in all subsequent humans. However, sin entered the world. With that came

disharmony, dissatisfaction, and divorce. But this was not the original intent for a man and his spouse (see Matthew 19:1-10).

With the work of Christ complete, we are to consider our marriages as being under the original pattern which was intended by God. Men are to love their wives even as if the two are one, because they are one. It would be illogical to not protect oneself, and therefore, “he who loves his wife loves himself.”

Life application: If a man wishes to promote his own happiness in the most effectual way, he had better begin by showing kindness to his wife.” Albert Barnes

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. Ephesians 5:29

Paul, in support of his statement that “husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies,” brings in an obvious matter. Unless mentally deranged, “no one ever hated his own flesh.” It is interesting that Paul uses the term “flesh” rather than “body.” His mind certainly hearkened back to Genesis 2:23 –

And Adam said:
“This *is* now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”

Though the man and wife have separate bodies, they are one flesh. A man doesn’t hate his own flesh, and the wife is his very flesh. Therefore, it is contrary to what is moral and biblically sound to hate one’s wife.

To further explain, he next says that a man will nourish and cherish his own flesh. The word “nourish” is found only twice in the Bible, and both are in Ephesians. It gives the sense of rearing a child up to maturity. In essence, it indicates “from childhood to adulthood.” This is how a man is to treat his wife. He is to care for her as their marriage moves from stage to stage. She is not be loved while young and in her flower, and then discarded after her body has become aged and worn.

The word “cherish” is also rare. It is found here and in 1 Thessalonians 2:7. “Cherish” is a good translation of it. It originally came from the thought, “to keep warm.” When it is cold out, we will protect ourselves with that which warms us. Maybe we will kindle a fire, make a cup of hot chocolate, and wrap up in something fuzzy. This is what one is also to do for his precious wife. He is to tend to her, cherishing her in a manner which will keep her safe, happy, and content.

And once again, in order to show the basis for this treatment of our beauties, Paul returns to the antitype, Christ. He says that we are expected to do these things “just as the Lord *does* the church.” He again equates Christ’s relationship to the church with a man’s relationship to his wife. For us to act contrary to this in regards to our wife is to then show contempt of how the Lord has already set the pattern for us in His love of us.

Life application: The Bible shows us, clearly and precisely, that men are to act properly towards their wives, caring for them and treating them in the same manner that Christ treats His church. When we fail to do this, our actions are certainly unacceptable in the eyes of the Lord.

For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Ephesians 5:30

Again as cited in the previous verse, this harkens back to Genesis 2. The woman was taken from the side of Adam. She was fashioned from who he already was, rather than being fashioned from the earth as was Adam. In a figurative way, the church sprang from the side of Christ as well. Thus, the personal nature of Eve being truly a part of Adam is repeated in the personal nature of our being so intimately connected to Christ.

In this most intimate union, Paul says that we “are members of His body.” Our spiritual connection to Christ is so tied up in the work of the Lord that we are directly connected to Him, even as being “of His flesh and of His bones.” Nothing could be more personal than this marvelous union to God through Christ. The pattern was set in Adam and Eve, and it follows through to us.

The lesson Paul is giving though needs to be remembered. Men are to love their wives as their own body, just as Christ loves His own body.

Life application: The patterns of the Bible are repeated to help us understand deeper spiritual truths. Things which are recorded in the Bible which happen in the stream of time in the physical creation are used to point us to these spiritual truths. As you read the Bible, keep this in mind and it will help open up seemingly obscure and odd passages to a fuller appreciation for the work of God in Christ.

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” Ephesians 5:31

Paul is using the previous example of husbands loving their wives from verses 28 and 29 to make a point. From the thought of those verses, he said “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” This is speaking of Christ. The words explain where Paul is going with verses 28 & 29. He is showing that the original giving of Eve to Adam was to be taken in

type and picture of what would come about in Christ. This will be made explicit in the verse to come.

For now, he cites the substance of Genesis 2:24 which explains the union between a man and a woman. Eve was taken from Adam's side; Adam made a proclamation concerning the nature of the woman; and from this came the resulting explanation. "For this reason" means, based on the intimate nature of what occurred, as well as the fact that the two bear one and the same nature, "a man shall leave his father and mother." The union of a man to a woman is to mean a new beginning for the man.

This is, in type, a picture of Christ. He left the realm of His heavenly Father and came to dwell among humanity. In so doing, the intent was that He would "be joined to [H]is wife." Man leaves his father and his mother and starts a new life together with his bride. Christ likewise came to join with His bride, meaning the church. The word "be joined" is a "compound verb which denotes the most intimate union" (Vincent's Word Studies).

It is in the union of Christ and His church that "the two shall become one flesh." This means one in nature and one in goal based on this most intimate union which has been established. We are given a spiritual nature instead of our carnal human nature, and we are to direct our lives to this nature as we await the coming of our Lord to consummate the marriage. This nature came from the pierced side of Christ, just as the nature of Eve came from the rib inside of Adam.

Although it was unknown at the time of the writing of the Genesis account, all of this was set up at the very beginning to show us what God would do in Christ. It is from the very first moments of man's existence, and even before the fall of man, that the plan was laid out and the type and picture of what would occur was given.

Life application: If we ever have doubts about where we are going, or if we come to the point where we think that control has been lost and things are just too much to face, all we need to do is contemplate the ramifications of this passage from Ephesians. Christ has called us out to be His bride. It is something that was planned from the very beginning of time. Nothing is out of control! Everything is being worked towards a marvelous end.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:32

According to Vincent's Word Studies, the word "great" acts as a predicate, not as an attribute. Therefore, this is correctly rendered, "This mystery is great..." Paul is telling us that what was just said about the man leaving his father and mother and being joined to the woman is a type and picture of what God would do in Christ with His church.

Paul calls this a “mystery” because it is something that had never been revealed before, but which was now being revealed by him. The symbolism of the Lord being wedded to His people does run through the Old Testament, but it was always thought to apply only to Israel. However, the mystery-now-revealed shows that the intent all along was that the marriage typology actually was pointing to God’s people, brought near to Him through the Person and work of Christ.

Having said that, Paul’s note about the greatness of the mystery shows that we can only understand a portion of what is being presented. In reality, until the consummation of the marriage, we can only speculate as to what lies ahead. However, it does lie ahead, and therefore we should be in eager anticipation of it and we should be continuously preparing ourselves for that day.

Life application: We are as a bride to our Bridegroom. Let us try to act like it.

Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects *her* husband. Ephesians 5:33

This last verse of the chapter begins with “Nevertheless.” It is an indication that Paul is returning to the practical aspects of the husband/wife relationship. He has been speaking of the mystical union of Christ and the church, of which the husband and wife relationship is a pattern. In order to “get back to the basics” from this high and lofty analogy, he brings it back down to a practical level with this word.

In the human economy of marriage, this final admonition begins with, “let each one of you in particular so love his wife as himself.” This doesn’t mean that a man is to love his wife as much as he loves himself, but he is to love her as if being his own self. This goes back to verse 31 which says that “the two shall become one flesh.” There is to be a love for the wife that maintains this united essence.

Next, Paul says, “and let the wife see that she respect *her* husband.” The word translated as “respect” here is *phobeó*. It actually means “to fear.” This is the reverential fear that a person might have towards God. It is used in Matthew 9:8 concerning the fear of the people when Jesus healed a paralytic. It is this type of reverential fear which is referred to. The wife is to give way to her husband in decisions and to submit to his authority with a reverence that is appropriate to his position as the human authority of the household.

Life application: When the admonitions of Paul concerning the husband/wife relationship are ignored or undermined, the family unit will inevitably fail to work properly. Each has been given a place by God, and all must adhere to that placement for the benefit of the family and to the honor of the Lord.