

Marriage (5) "Duties of Husbands" – Ephesians
5:22-33

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Texts that Transform
By Terry L. Johnson

Bible Text: Ephesian 5:22-33
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The Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah
207 Bull Street
Savannah, GA 31401

Website: ipcsav.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/ipcsav

Our Father in heaven, we give thanks for your word. It's living, it's active it's sharper than any two-edged sword. We pray that you might use that word to plunge deeply into our souls and even into our bones and marrow, judging the thoughts and the intentions of our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 5:25-33. Ephesians 5. We're picking up where we left off on February 17. No, that's not a joke. We were looking at the duties of wives then and we're now looking at the duties of husbands, and in between we looked at marriage itself and just so you know my own conviction and point of view on these things and the motivation out of which I preach, I believe that this is the point of the spear of secular paganism in our country right now, and the point at which the Christian community is feeling the attack of the world, an attack that threatens to undermine the church itself, and that is the whole Christian social order that has dominated the Western world for somewhere between 1,500-1,800 years, the prevailing understanding of marriage, the family, the home, of children, of what it even means to be male and female, all of that is at risk, all of that is being directly challenged, all of that is being assaulted and suppressed and threatened. So I think it's important, I've spent a lot of time on children, that was a number of months ago, and now we've spent some time on marriage and the reason is that I think this is the strategic topic, this is where we need to focus our attention because this is where the world is focusing its attention, and the social revolutionaries are playing the long game with us and they intend to win, and where that's going to all end up, it remains to be seen. So we need to understand what Christian marriage is, we need to understand the essential duties of wives, we need to understand the essential duties of husbands and the essential duties of parents.

So we're moving along now, we're looking at the duties of husbands and what we will notice just to begin with is that her three verses, verses 22 through 24, are followed by his eight verses. That in itself is saying something as we read them together.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church

to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their 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 Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The duties of husbands, what are the duties of husbands? Number 1, husbands are to love their wives. They are to love their wives, look at verse 25, "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," that is, husbands are to love their wives with sacrificial love. Christ suffered so that we would not suffer, so likewise the husband is to love his wife with bleeding love, with dying love, so that she need not suffer.

Now, in fact, motherhood provides an excellent example of what we mean by sacrificial love. Think about what happens with a mother as a child is conceived within her, the child in effect takes over her body, makes sure that it receives the nourishment that it needs, even if it means deprivation for her and certainly discomfort for her throughout the period of the pregnancy, the pain of bringing forth a child is all part of her suffering, sacrificial suffering on behalf of the life of another. Then her providing nourishment for the child, likewise depriving her of sleep, depriving her of perhaps the nourishment that she needs. All that is sacrifice on behalf of another. That is sacrificial love. That is the love that comes natural to a mother with child. It is a love that the apostle is commanding again and again and underscoring and emphasizing and reemphasizing, the love with which husbands are to love their wives. What comes natural to a woman who is a mother does not come natural to a man, he must be taught, he must be instructed, he must be told.

So husbands are to sacrifice their health, they're to sacrifice their bodily well-being, their safety, their life itself in order to provide for their wife's well-being, to protect them and to provide for them. This is something that nature itself should teach us. Why has God given to the husband the greater brute strength that he has than his wife? What does nature, what does the design of the Creator say to us about that? It's not so that he could use it for his own ends, it's so that he'll be able to protect his wife and to protect his children. She has to be more cautious about her body because her body in design is one that will carry a child, so she needs to be careful with that body. She will need to nourish that child so she can't be, subject herself to danger in the same way. She can't be reckless in the same way that a man might be tempted to be reckless. Why? Because her body will carry a child and will then provide nourishment for that child. The man has the stronger body so that he will extend protection and care and provide for his wife and protect his wife.

My grandfather, I've spoken of him in the past, I'm gonna bring him up again, my grandfather spent all of his adult life in the coal mines of western Pennsylvania and when

I was a little boy, my first memories of him are the heavy breathing that was a result of black lung that eventually took his life at the age of 69, so after 50 years in the coal mines, he went down when he was 11 or 12 years old driving a mule cart to pick up the coal and then drive it out, time out for World War I, then the rest of his adult life in the coal mines. I asked him as a little boy, "Pop, why'd you do it?" He said, "Because I had to get bread on the table." He had to feed his family. He had to take care of his children. He had to take care of his wife. He's willing to take the risks. He's willing to sacrifice his physical health, his bodily well-being. Life in the mines is a very very hard life that takes its toll on one's body. As we age, we know the aches and pains, they're nothing like that of someone who has been involved in manual labor decade after decade. "Why did you do it?" Because he understood that was his responsibility. He needed to provide for his wife. He needed to protect his family and so he went down into the mines year after year.

My father and mother were married in March of 1951. They then moved to California so that he could attend seminary. Nine months later, January, my older sister Gail was born. In December of the same year my second sister Peggy was born. So 1952 they had a child born in January and a child born in December. He was going to seminary and holding down one, not two, but three jobs. Why? Well, because that's what husbands do. That's what men do who know what men are called to do and why they have the greater physical strength, and their responsibility while their wives are providing for children, their responsibility to see to it that they are provided for and see that they are protected. What they did was not unusual of that generation, it was rather typical of that generation and all previous generations going back as far as our memories can go. You know, all of us would rather be resting in the sand, letting the cool breezes of the beach blow over our face. We'd rather be, perhaps, playing a round of golf or fishing or hunting or hanging out with our buddies, but what the Christian husband does is he forgoes all of that and he's willing to take the risks and enjoy the dangers and to bear the burdens of providing and protecting his wife and children.

So he's living with his wife, then in the words of Peter, 1 Peter 3:7, in an understanding way. He is a student of his wife. He understands that she's different. He understands that she looks at the world differently, she interacts with the world differently. She has a God-given maternal instinct whether she has children or not because she designed to carry children. I'm not saying that's the only thing she's designed for, she's designed for other things as well, our common humanity designs us for many things that we have in common, particularly to know and to serve God, and so we are equal in that respect but we have a different physical composition, we have different organs and a woman has the peculiar design to bear, to carry children and to then nourish those children, and so she has some maternal instincts. She has this nesting instinct. She has this sense of the need to provide safety and to have adequate provisions for her children. So she has unique anxieties and fears and concerns in connection with the safety and the provision of her children, and the Christian husband is going to live with her and understanding, understanding that she is the weaker vessel and therefore she is vulnerable and she's conscious of her vulnerabilities, and so she needs safe spaces, to use some of the language of today. She needs protection mainly from predatory males. She needs safe houses in case her husband beats her. She needs locker rooms and shower facilities and

bathrooms from which men are excluded. She needs safe spaces. Why? Because she's a weaker vessel.

I don't know how many safe spaces the snowflakes in college need, but you want, let's get real about physiology, let's get real about biology, let's get real about design. There have always been predatory males. There has always been toxic masculinity and that's why the Christian husband understands that and understands his need to protect and provide for his wife and his children. We don't have a me-too movement for men. We don't need one. We do need one for women because they're different and the Christian man is going to understand the difference and the Bible explains the difference, accommodates that difference and gives us instruction on the basis of that difference.

So the Christian husband is not going to make fun of her distinctive anxieties and concerns. He's going to understand them because it's built in, it's part of the design, it's part of the connection between the physiology and the psychology. She was made to bear children. You were not. I have concerns for safety and provision that you don't have because you've never carried a child and you're not made to carry a child and you're not concerned about physical safety the way that I am because of that distinctive calling that I have as a woman.

Secondly, husbands are to lead their wives, or to put it another way, they are to love their wives by leading them. So looking at verse 26, "that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word." Follow the verbs, all of these action verbs. What is Christ doing for the church? He is sanctifying her. He is cleansing her. He is washing her. He is, verse 27, "so that he might present," he's presenting her, "the church to himself in splendor so that she might be holy and without blemish." All of the initiative in salvation, very clear here, is with Christ. All the initiative is with him. He is the actor. He is sanctifying, cleansing, washing, presenting. Christ's pattern is the pattern for husbands. As all the initiative is with him, so the initiative is to be the initiative in love and the initiative is to be with him. That's what we call leading, is taking the initiative.

So in verse 28, "In the same way," what? In the same way that Christ initiated with us, husbands are to take the same loving initiative. "In the same way husbands should love their wives," verse 28, "as their own bodies." What do we do for our bodies? Well, we feed our bodies. We rest our bodies. We groom our bodies. We bathe our bodies. We entertain our bodies. We comfort our bodies. Oh, about 90% of what we do is for the sake of our bodies and the psychological well-being that accompanies our physical well-being, so much of our energy is directed toward our bodies. We are servants of our needs and our appetites and so we see to it, we take the steps that are necessary to see that our body gets the kind of care and comfort and pleasure that we desire, and what the apostle is saying is that, well, that's the same way that you are to love your own wife.

Verse 29, "no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church." Nourish means to provide for, the nourishment is provided by the husband in the use of the metaphor as it's developing. Cherishing is caring for. So you

nourish, you provide for, you cherish, you care for your wife in the same way that we do for ourselves. We are very self-directed, self-centered and so we are to direct the same energy and attention and focus that we give to ourselves to our wives. This is what the Christian husband does.

We're to provide for our wives Christian leadership. We are to initiate, caring for our wives, protecting them, providing for them, leading, leading by initiating. That's, I think, the right way to see Christian leadership. What is Christian leadership? Christian leadership is initiative. Christian leadership is seeing the need before it is identified by others and brought to our attention and initiating caring for the need. Jesus explains Christian leadership in Matthew 20:25-28 and the context there was answering the mother of James and John in the hearing of the disciples regarding which of her sons or that her sons might be the most prominent in Christ's kingdom and Jesus says to them, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them." So the point there, that's not what Christian leadership is, that's not what leadership in the home is, that's not the way that a husband leads his wife. He doesn't lord it over. He's not just barking orders. So easily authority degenerates into tyranny, that is not Christian leadership. That is not the way that the husband leads the wife. That's what pagans do, they lord it over, they have a little authority and they wet all over themselves, they're so excited that they have authority, they just start ordering everyone around, they lord it over others. "I'm the boss. I'm in charge." You remember when President Reagan was shot, one of his aides made a declaration that will go down in history from the White House, "I'm in charge around here." Very military kind of assumption of authority. Too many husbands run their houses in that way, "I'm in charge around here. I'm the head of this house." It's not what a Christian husband does.

"It shall not be so among you." So what does Christian leadership look like? Well, "whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave." The diakonos, the servant and a doulos, a slave, both words are used here, "even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus himself is the pattern for Christian leadership. He did not come to be served but to serve. How did he serve? He gave his life. To what extent are husbands to love their wives? Even at the sacrifice of their own lives.

So they are to love their wives and they are to lead their wives, they are to love their wives by leading them, leading them by showing initiative, not merely barking orders. Now he still does have responsibility, he still does have authority, he doesn't surrender that, it doesn't mean that he gives into her every whim, in fact, that would be the opposite of loving leadership. He is given responsibility to lead so he must lead. We're talking about the way in which he leads. In what way does he lead? Through sacrificial service, without surrendering authority. So that means at times he will have to make decisions that will be contrary to the wishes of his wife though in his judgment in her best interest, and he'll have to pay the price, whatever that will be, whatever the cost that will be inflicted by his wife, he'll just have to bear it, he'll just have to live with it because that's what it means to love your wife and that's what it means to lead your wife, you take the

brunt of the decision with which there is no agreement, but yet has to be made one way or another.

What is the end or goal or the aim of this loving and leading leadership? Go back to verse 26. The goal described in connection with Christ and his church is that "he might sanctify her, having cleansed her, having washed her so that she might be presented without spot or wrinkle so that she might be holy and without blemish." The goal of Christ with his church is the sanctification of the church and so the goal of the husband in relation to the loving and leading of his wife is to be her sanctification. So as Jesus sanctifies and cleans and washed so that she's without spot and holy and without blemish, so the sanctification of the husband's wife, her spiritual well-being is to be the end game, the goal, the aim of the loving and leading of the husband.

So that leads to the question: is the result of your leadership lifting her up or dragging her down? You husbands, is your leadership in the home such that lifts her up or spiritually speaking does it drag her down? Are you encouraging her in the direction of holiness or worldliness? Are you encouraging her to have spiritual aspirations? Are you encouraging her in such a way that her appetite for the things of the Spirit is growing? Is she becoming more devoted to spiritual discipline? Is she growing? Is she maturing? Is she learning? Is the result of your husbandly leadership in the home the sanctification of your wife, her growth in Christ, her maturing as a believer?

That seems to me to be the test here. That's the result. Look at the parallels. Why has Christ designed for his bride? Sanctification. Holiness. Without spot, without wrinkle, without stain. So what's to be the goal of the husband? It should be the same. The result of our leadership as husbands in the home should be that our wives are spiritually growing, they are increasingly hungering and thirsting after righteousness, they are increasingly seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and if it's not then we need to reevaluate what we're doing, we need to ask ourselves, "What kind of impact am I having on my wife? What is the result of her living with me? And if she's not growing as a result of living with me, what is the result of living with me? What impact am I having? Is it negative or positive? Is it in the direction of godliness or is it in the direction of worldliness? Which way is it going? How do I lead the trajectory of our relationship together?"

So the loving and the leading of the husband aims at the sanctification of his wife. That's the way he is to evaluate himself and his role as a husband. Am I tending my wife's garden? And is the result of it that she's growing in grace, growing in maturity, growing in Christ-likeness, increasingly bearing and manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit? Or am I just a dead weight spiritually in her life and she's dragging me off to church, and she's the one who's got to encourage me in the direction of family devotions, and she's the one who initiates spiritual conversations? I'm a dead weight to her? If I am, I need to search my soul and repent and ask the question of myself and begin to seek ways in which I can become what I'm meant to be as a husband. I'm given the responsibility to lead, lead to what end? Sanctification of your wife so that she'll be holy, so she'll be blameless, so that she'll grow in grace.

So as we look at these roles, we understand that there is going to be some variation from couple to couple, time to time, place to place, and yet there are created universals and the basic roles we will not transcend. Husbands are to love and lead, wives are to be subject and respect their husbands. All of this, I've got two more things that I want to say, all of this is meant to be for our good. There's only one arbitrary command in the Bible. In case you're wondering about that, is there some law that God laid down? Alright, husbands, you are to lead, wives you are to be subject, just this arbitrary command, no reason for it, no purpose behind it, just one of those things? No, there's only one arbitrary command in the whole Bible. Where is that? It's in the garden, "Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Why not? Because God said so. It was beautiful, tasty, had everything going for it. "You're not to eat of it. You can eat of all the other trees, not that one." Why not? "Because I said so." Arbitrary command, see if Adam and Eve would obey. Aside from that one, none of them are arbitrary, they are all built into the whole nature of things. They are designed for human nature, for the nature of nature, for our design. They are designed for our design. They're meant for our good. What's true of the Sabbath law is true of every one of God's commands. The Sabbath was made for man, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Made for man. It's for our good. That's what's true of the Sabbath is true of every command that God ever gave except that one in the garden. It's for our good. They're all for our good. None of them are a punishment. None of them are meant to prevent us from finding fulfillment. None of them are meant to ruin our lives.

I remember when I took over the youth group at Granada, this was right out of seminary, I took over the youth group, I began to explain that we were going to study the Bible and have a fairly serious youth group and it wasn't going to be fun and games anymore, and one of the kids as soon as I got done cried out, "My life is ruined!" Yeah, that's what he thought. No, none of God's commands are designed to ruin us. They're all for our good. They're all exactly proportioned, calibrated for our good. And this is the way the family is supposed to work, and this is the way wives are to relate to husbands, and husbands are to relate to wives, and parents are to relate to children. They are all for our good.

God's commands are the owner's manual as to how to operate and care for the human machine without breakdowns. You want a happy home life? You want a happy marriage? Then you comply. You understand that your marriage is permanent. You understand that your marriage is exclusive. You understand that there are role distinctions within the marriage itself. And these commandments, 1 John 5:3, they are not burdensome. No, they are a joy. We delight in the laws of God. We meditate upon them day and night, says the first Psalm. They're not burdensome. They're not some big weight that's on our shoulders, this big burden that we have to bear, that are somehow going to prohibit us from ever really enjoying life. No, just the opposite. Here is the path of human flourishing, the path of the commandments. They map out for us the paths of righteousness. That's where you find the green pastures and the still waters, but if you want to be miserable, then you just ignore them, ignore what God says and then say hello to tension within your marriage, fight for control of the house. If you want peace and joy, you embrace the divine design.

You need the grace to do so. You'll never do it in your own strength but grace flows from the cross to us and provides that which God requires. All that he commands, he enables.

Then finally, what's at stake? What's at stake is a portrait of the Gospel that the Christian home is meant to be. Marriage is not a sacrament. We don't agree with Rome about that. Not a sacrament, it's a creation ordinance there from the beginning, not the sole preserve of the church, not instituted by Christ. It's been there since Adam and Eve, "Man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife," Genesis 2. So it's not a sacrament, nevertheless it has some commonalities with sacraments in that it is a visual display of the Gospel itself. As the wife is subject to her husband, she portrays the relationship of the believer to Christ. As the husband loves his wife with sacrificial love, he displays the love of Christ for his church.

People are reading less and less. That's been pretty well documented. People are not reading books. Students are not reading books, they're taking final exams on books they've never read. It's happening all the time. You're smirking out there, some of you, because you know you've done it, right? People are not reading books by and large. They're not reading the Bible. Among the books they're not reading, what Bible do they read? They read the Bible that we present to them as we live out the Christian life. They need that visual aid, that visual portrait of godliness. Fewer and fewer people in the Western world are attending church. So once again, they're not gonna hear the Gospel but they can see the Gospel, they can see the love of Christ in the love of the husband for his wife. They can see the response of the believer in the response of the wife to the husband. Christian marriage, therefore, is not egalitarian as though Christ and the believer were on equal terms, standing on the same playing field. No, Christian marriage is hierarchical and complementary. We have different roles that complement each other. Final authority rests with the husband even as authority in the church is in Christ over the church and believers, and as we live out our Christian marriages in that way, the world sees a picture of the Gospel.

In recent weeks I've finished reading Rodney Stark' "The Rise of Christianity." The basic argument, you can sum it up in 30 second is that Christianity was able to conquer the Roman Empire because the Gospel came into a world that was rightly characterized as a culture of death. Birthrates were plummeting in the Roman Empire. Why? Widespread infanticide, widespread abortion, widespread avoidance of marriage by men, widespread homosexuality, widespread bisexuality, erotic fulfillment was being expressed in ways that are not procreational, and so birthrates were plunging. The Christians came into the world and they were pro-life. They didn't abort. They didn't practice infanticide. They were pro-marriage. Christian men and women married. They had families. They welcomed children in the world. They were pro-life. They were pro-family. And the effect after 300 years, now it did take 300 years but in 300 years they were the majority. Pagan population declined, Christian population increased. It was Rodney Stark's, "The Rise of Christianity," Princeton University Press, no less, argument is basically this: the Christian home conquered the Roman Empire. Come right down to it, it was the Christian home. As much as it was Gospel preaching and doctrine, it was the Christian home. It was the Christian teaching that God is love. And so you take care of people, you love

your enemies, you love your neighbors, the epidemics hit and you take care of the sick, and you marry, and you have children, and you welcome those children into the world, you're fruitful and multiply, Genesis 1:28, and they just out-reproduced the pagans and took over and established then a civilization that lasted for 1,500 years. That's remarkable. Christendom, Christ's kingdom right up until relatively recent times.

So don't underestimate the importance of what we talk about here when we talk about the Christian home. Christian family, children, husbands, wives, marriage, absolutely vital and as the world is attacking full-on the Christian concept of marriage, family, home, children, life, as it attacks this is where we need to strengthen our institutions so that we can continue to have a witness, a visible Gospel witness in this world not just in our preaching but in our homes.

As we pray together.

Our Father in heaven, we pray, O Lord, that you will strengthen our marriages, strengthen our homes. We are filled with a world that is full of temptations that would absolutely destroy our marriages, destroy our homes, destroy our children, bring massive confusion and pain and suffering into our lives, and so we pray, O Lord, that you would shield us from the deceptions of the devil and strengthen our homes. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's sing together hymn 719, "A Christian Home." 719.