

# The Heart and Striving of a Christian Husband

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Let's turn together to Colossians 3. Colossians 3 and we're going to look at one verse and then I'm going to skip around to some other verses. We are in between book studies here at Grace Life Church. The mainstay of the pulpit ministry here is expositional preaching through books of the Bible verse by verse, chapter by chapter, but in between I like to pick out some biblical truths that we might need to exhort one another about and on Sunday nights we're looking at Ephesians and we're real close to the section on the home or the family and so I thought I would just take the exhortation to husbands and to it on Mother's Day, and the exhortation to wives and do it on Father's Day. So that's what we're going to do this morning, we're going to talk about the heart and the striving of a Christian husband. The heart and striving of a Christian husband.

We'll begin with Colossians 3 as Paul writes to this church in the Gentile region of the world, the more dominated Greek and Roman part of the world, and he writes something very revolutionary here as he says in Colossians 3:19,

19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

Radical. I. A Christian husband has in his heart and he is striving to love his wife. To love his wife. Paul simply states to this Gentile church something, again, that was radical in their context: love your wives.

Well now, the Gentile world like the Jewish world of the day, held to the structures that God had ordained for marriage and for the home. The headship of the husband. The submission of the wife. Then the submission of the children. That's not wrong. That's right. That's biblical. But what Christianity did was he turned it inside out and turned it right-side up by bringing in – now listen – this powerful love factor. Husbands, love your wives. She's not a piece of property. She's not your menial slave or servant. You're to love her.

The word "love" here is the word "agape." Now you probably remember the word "agape," we mention it a lot. It's actually a word the New Testament writers invented. They invented this word to describe the unique and special love only born-again believers can possess. It's not a natural love. Now the Greeks had a word for sexual love, "eros"; they had a word for familial love, love of a family or love of a brother, "phileo"; but they did not have a word that represented that unique, supernatural love that God gives you at

conversion that only true Christians possess so they made a word up to designate that love and that is the word "agape" and that's the word that's used here. Husbands, love your wives.

It's also in the present tense here which means, "Husbands, keep on keeping on loving your wives." I think this is one reason why God forbids marriage of a believer to a non-believer because, girls, if you marry a non-believing husband, he has not the capacity to love you with agape. He doesn't have any of it. He can love you with eros, sexual love. He can love you in sort of a warm emotional family way, but that deep Spirit-wrought love that makes marriage worth living is absent. It's agape. You marry someone without the new birth, someone who does not have a true Christian heart, you might find yourself degraded, humiliated, forced to violate your conscience and many other horrors that you don't want to go through.

He continues here and under this concept of loving your wives, he continues and says, "and do not be embittered against her." I think the reality is that whether you're a husband or a wife, you never score 100. You're going to fall short and so he's telling these converted Gentile Roman and Greek primarily men, that they need to be gracious toward their wives, that their wives do not meet up to their hopes and their expectations because if a husband is not careful, he can be morbid in his introspection of his wife's performance because she is to be his helpmeet, she is to be under his headship, but yet she's not perfect and if he's not careful and he's regularly in a forgiving spirit, he can be embittered against her. 1 Corinthians 13:5 reminds us that love "does not take into account a wrong suffered." Men, the Bible is telling you, "You must not keep a record of your wife's failures. You must not keep a ledger of how she's disappointed you. Be forgiving. Get over it. Let it go." That's what he's saying.

Now again, that would be revolutionary as most of these Roman and Greek men of the day before their conversion would have viewed their wives as just another form of a servant and most of them, if not many of them, had a wife and then concubines and then prostitutes at the temples where they worshiped. So this was a transformation. It's a great great rapping of history that the women's movement does not give great support to Christianity for liberating women because this is the most liberating thing ever heard in the ancient Greek and Roman culture and in so many other cultures. The Muslim world, the American Indian world, when Christian missionaries came there and the women were treated with equal dignity and as joint heirs of the salvation offered through Jesus Christ and men were taught not to treat their wives like possessions or slaves, women were greatly liberated from the wrongs and the mistreatment they had known in previous days.

So it says, "Husbands, love her." Someone said, "Don't call her Honey and then act like vinegar." The man who loves Christ and claims to be his servant must show it by loving his wife and being careful to not be embittered against her at her imperfections.

Now II, not only is the heart and the striving of a Christian husband to love her, secondly, it's to lead her. As Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 5, he elaborates a little bit on this love. He says, "Husbands, love your wives the way Christ loves the

church." Now, this one sermon doesn't give me time to go into all the dimensions that could be applied here, but one of the ways that Christ loves his church is that he leads his church. He has not left us orphaned, has he not? He has given us the word of God to lead us and to guide us and to inform us and to direct us. He's given us the Spirit of God and placed it in our hearts. We can read the Bible. We don't have to go to a pope or a bishop or a cardinal or a priest, we can open God's word aided by the illuminating effect of the Holy Spirit and God guides his bride, his church. And of course, he's given you an important foundational means of how Christ guides his church and that is through the preaching of the word, and then brothers and sisters in Christ can study the Bible together and exhort one another and reprove one another and encourage one another from the word. One of the great ways Christ loves his bride is he leads her and instructs her and men ought to be leading and instructing their wives, certainly with a respect for her but that's your role. You ought to be leading your wives.

Now one of the ways that we can do this is by modeling godliness and that's one of the ways Jesus did it. Jesus said, "Which one of you convicts me of sin? I've called you to live holy lives and I, myself, am living a holy life." Model before your wives uprightness. Model before them a high ethical character. Model before them honesty and truthfulness. Model before them a humility before God and before his word.

Now one of the problems in the early Gentile church in particular was as these ladies experienced liberation, they do what we all do, they got out of balance. A lot of times when people discover grace, they go too far and begin to be permissive about sin because it's all grace. Or vice versa, people can find the works of the law and get too heavy there. But one of the things ladies would do in these Gentile churches as they saw that they could be saved, God loved them and had them on an equal plane with their husbands as far as their value as a human being before a holy God, and they thought, "Well, that means I no longer have to honor the headship of my husband." But that was wrong.

No, you do honor his headship but now he leads in a way you've never seen before with Christian agape love in his heart, and he needs to model that and one of the great ways you model Christianity before your wives is that you carry a spirit of humility – now listen, men – that you too are under authority. Your wife needs to see that you too submit to that employer at work respectfully and honorably. Your wives need to see that you too respect and submit to the elders of your church. Your wife needs to see that you too bow before a holy God and that you too are humbled and need a Savior. That's the way Jesus modeled it. Did he not get on his knees and pray before his Father, "Father, not my will but thou will be done." He modeled it.

Then if I could just say a couple of practical things about not only modeling but also taking the initiative. Taking the initiative in your marriage. It should be the husband who leads out on the things in the home spiritually. Opening the Bible. I'm not one that's real big on real structured formal Bible study in the home. I think that's fine but I've seen many times people make it a legalistic law type thing and I don't want you to have that. I want the home to be warm and true and real. But opening the Bible in your home. Reading the Bible together. Discussing next week's text for the sermon or next week's

small group lesson. All these things are the ways a husband can take the initiative and be the leader spiritually in his home. Of course, leading out in prayer and so very vitally important, choosing the right church family to belong to as a family. The husband should lead his wife.

Now look, guys, we always lead listening to her, respecting her viewpoint, but at the end – now men, are you listening – she will not answer for your marriage at the judgment bar of God, you will. And ladies, don't you usurp that headship or God may hold you accountable at the judgment bar of God. Trust me, God has put on him something you don't want, a responsibility and an accountability for how he leads his wife and leads his family.

Men should lead out in deciding what we believe and why we believe it. Spiritually leading. Socially leading. What are our values? What do we stand for? Here are some things we are not going to do and here are some things we are allowed to do. Men should lead out in these things. Leading financially in the family budget. Certainly listening, getting advice and guidance from your spouse, but men must make the final decision. They bear a responsibility before God.

One of the ways that Christ loves his church is he faithfully leads his church, so as a Christian husband, your heart and your striving is to love your wives, loving them with agape love, the kind of love Christ has. Another way is leading your wives. Thirdly, another way you have the heart and a striving as a Christian husband is to provide for and to protect her. To provide for her and to protect her.

Ephesians 5:25 says that husbands are to love their wives like Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. What did Jesus do for his bride? How did he primarily provide for and protect us? He provided for his bride and he protected his bride by going to the cross and bearing the wrath of God in her place. He protected her from the wrath she deserved. He gave himself fully and without reservation for his bride, the church, and there is a specialness here and I don't want to get bogged down in too much theology on the atonement but one of the reasons why we believe in particular redemption, let me just explain it this way: I believe that in Jesus' death there is an effect for all men; there is a dying of Jesus that has an effect for all men. I believe the very reason why you're not consumed in the wrath of God this very moment is because the blood of Jesus Christ holds back the wrath of God for your lifetime but that's a temporal benefit that's for all men, but there's an effectual element to the atonement where Jesus died and in an effectual and saving way for his children or the elect. And what do we mean by that? Jesus died uniquely and specially for those who would believe, his children, which means they are – now listen – they are his one and only and that's why this makes sense when he says, "Love your wives the way Christ loved the church." Here's what he's saying: she's your one and only. He's saying as Jesus didn't just splash his love generally all over everybody in the same way, you're not to splash your affections and your attention and your love over everybody, you're to be directed and specific. She has become your one and only.

So you are, among other good things you do in your life, you're to take special care of her, looking out for her, guarding her, protecting her, providing for her. We hadn't been married long and Pam and I were on a getaway trip and she slept in one morning and I got up early, couldn't sleep, happens to me sometimes, and I was down in the lobby of the hotel and the fire alarm goes off and when the fire alarm went off, everybody got into a panic and I thought, "Good night. This looks like the real thing." Well, we were on the tenth floor and the elevator doesn't work and without thinking, I hit those steps and I ran up 10 floors, ran to the hotel room door, banged on the door, dragged Pam out in her pajamas. Ms. Pam don't go anywhere without being presentable. We go all the way down to the first floor only to get off of the steps, walk into the lobby and they look at us and said, "It was a false alarm." But I did do something right. She said, "I know you love me now. You would have never run up those steps to protect me had you not loved me." So that saved me from that pulling her into public in her pajamas.

But anyway, my point is think about how Jesus sacrificed for his one and only. Now men, it's your job to provide for and to protect your wife and I would just ask you and I'll tell you, I'm preaching to Brother Jeff this morning, I'm preaching to all of us but I'm preaching to me, ask your wife, "What are the ways you feel secure? What are the things I can do to make you feel protected?" It might be, "Well, you need to be the one who makes sure the doors are locked at night. It just makes me feel secure." And different ladies are different ways and do you know what it depends on? It depends on what their daddies did. If their daddies did certain things that made them feel secure and protected, then they're going to want those very things.

So learn those things and learn your role. I'm not perfect at it but I generally try to make sure when we're walking down a sidewalk, I get on the side where the street is and put her on the other side. It's just a notion of protection for her. I try to always get out of my car and wait for her and not walk in front. Haven't always been good at that but I want you to know I'm doing better. You know, I thought by now I would have it down and I'm still having to repent and learn – but listen – if you love Jesus, your heart and your striving is to be a Christian husband. Now I know we live in a day where a lot of ladies gain employment outside the home. I'm not here to condemn you for that but I am here to say this: it does complicate the biblical model and it can lead to some frustration in what are our roles. So I would just ask young couples: be very prayerful and mindful. It may be a very good thing for young ladies before they have children to work. I'm just going to say it this way: because a lot of girls are not raised with the disciplines of homemaking already there. We're not doing a real good job there. Of course, some of you are but across the board, we're not doing a really good job there and so sometimes it's good for a young lady to learn the disciplines of work and she can then transfer that maybe to her home as she has children. Now you seek the Lord on that and you men are responsible there but before God, he's called you to be like Jesus was for his bride, the provider and the protector for your home.

I'd like to say one quick thing about the notions of feminism and the so-called progressive movement today. To me it's like they talk out of both sides of their mouth. On the one hand, women are 100% fully equal to men, and by the way, women are infinitely superior

to men at being women, and men are infinitely superior to women at being men. It's always been that way. God didn't make us alike. So on the one hand they say women can do anything a man can do, they're just like men, and then on the other hand they say, now we need these special laws, provisions, statutes, etc. so that we can be equal to men. Well, if you're equal, you don't need the special laws and statutes. Then we find that the feminist women look for a surrogate husband. They want childcare. They want free schooling. They want free this and free that. We need somebody to protect us and to provide for us is what they're saying. You just can't get it out of a woman's heart because God put it in there, the need for provision and for protection.

Well, the heart and the striving of the Christian husband is, fourthly, to serve her. To serve her. As a matter of fact, in Ephesians 5:28-29, I think we'll have this on the screen, in Ephesians 5:28-29 the Bible says,

28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,

He's saying, "Now wait a minute, you're one organism. When you get married, you're no longer two, you're one and there is one head, the husband." Remember, a creature with no heads is dead and a creature with two heads is a monstrosity. God gave this new organism one head but that one head is to function like your head functions for your own body. I mean, you can have a sore toe or 1,001 things going on in your body, do you know what your head does? Your head says, "I've got to take care of the body." And that's the way you are, you deny your will as the head, the husband does, to serve her to meet her needs.

Now I'm not saying you can meet every want and every desire and one of the things that has to be said when you preach a sermon like this is that after almost four decades of counseling, you realize there are thousands and thousands of dynamics here that change things. I've seen some dear ladies that, bless their hearts, it didn't matter what the husband did, he could never ever please her. It just was almost an impossibility and actually she would get him to a place where he was her menial slave almost. It went from him serving her as a head to making her the idol of his life. So there are some exceptions and some perversions of the doctrine but, brothers, we are called to make sure we deny ourselves and serve our wives. Now here's what I mean by that: Jesus denied his will, "Father, not my will but thy will be done," as he went to the cross.

So we are to look for those ways we can show her that we want to serve her. When you have a cold, as I do right now, I don't think I have a catchable cold, I have sort of a sinus thing, but when you have something like that, you change what you do because you're respecting what is your very body. You need to understand, we'll talk about this more later, but someone said one time that men often play with a toy before reading the instruction manual and they end up blowing a fuse. You need to understand what her needs are and how you can serve to meet them. Women must have the assurance from their husbands that they are God's gift to them and that they are more important than the

husband's career or his hobbies. Men must not commit adultery with their careers or with their hobbies. This is that agape love we talked about earlier. You see, God has designed that the greatest need of her soul is to be loved unconditionally. That's a need she has. What was the greatest gift of our souls and our husband, Jesus, our groom met? He loved us unconditionally and went to the cross.

She wants to be loved not for what she does but for who she is. We have to continually remind ourselves, guys, that men and women are so very different. Men are so task-oriented and we're to study our wives and learn how they're different. For example, men are task-oriented, we want the bottom line but a woman, they view situations through a broad range of emotions, a tapestry, if you will, of emotions, and they want us to accept them and understand them the way they are, and when we do this, a woman tends to open up her heart and reveal her heart and true intimacy can result.

One of the things, suggestions I would give you based on how Jesus loves his bride, the church, is you meet her need for communication. Think about how the Lord Jesus tells us we can come boldly to the throne of grace. He just offers us to come and I think for us men, it ought to be a discipline of our hearts in loving our wives with agape love to take time to give her the kind of communication she needs. My wife has a phrase that she gives me because my mind is often three years down the road thinking something, strategizing, planning something, and that's a good gift but it's got to be kept in balance, and I remember this years ago, she says it quite often and it's a good thing for her to say. We were on a date and we, as a matter of fact, just talked this last week about reviving our date night. We need to get that back on track. But we were on a date and I forgot where she was but she made this simple statement, "Look at me with your eyeballs." She's saying, "We need to communicate. I want to hear what you think. I want you to hear what I think."

Well, men don't necessarily need that the way ladies need that but what do we do, guys? We do what our groom did, we deny ourselves to meet that need. That's one of the ways we're loving her. Well, another one is affection. God made ladies just to thrive on an need affection differently than men do. Now men need it. It's good for men, but far too often men always combine it with sexuality. That's not sin, but we need to learn to give that basic general affection because it's a need that our wives have.

One guy wrote this, he said it's the simplest and most readily mastered expression of affection and that is a hug. The benefits of a hug are manifold. It's the perfect cure for what ails you. It has no moveable parts. No batteries to wear out. No periodic checkups. It's low energy consumption. It's high energy yield. It's inflation proof. It's non-taxable. It's non-polluting. And of course, it's fully returnable. Hugging is healthy. It relieves tension, combats depression, reduces stress, and improves blood circulation. It's invigorating. It's rejuvenating. It elevates self-esteem. It generates good will. It has no unpleasant side effects. It's nothing less than a miracle drug. It's Mother's Day. Make sure you hug your mom today if you've still got her. Un-sexually related affection. It's another way men can learn to deny themselves and meet the needs of their wives.

One counselor wrote, "While lust can cause many a man to stray, a woman can literally be hugged into an affair if her marriage is void of affection." It's something you do. Do you know what you'll find out, guys? If you'll just do it more, you'll like it more. If you'll just give that kind of affection more, it's more of a joy and a pleasure to you.

3. Another way is romance. Romance. This is a way we can serve our wives. Let me just read to you again right quick from another Christian counselor. He said, "If I had the power to communicate only one message to every family in America, I would specify the importance of romantic love to every aspect of feminine existence. It provides the foundation for a woman's self-esteem, for her joy in living, and for her sexual responsiveness. Therefore the vast number of men who find themselves in bone-tired marriages and find themselves locked out of the bedroom should know where the trouble possibly lies. Real love, affectionate, caring, cherishing love can melt an iceberg." So that's another way we can serve our wives. It's so amazing how much romance can fill the courtship days but you have to determine to keep restoring the romance as the marriage chugs along.

5. To have a heart and striving to be a real Christian husband, you need to understand her. Understand her. We've crossed over in this a little bit but what I mean is to accept her as a woman. 1 Peter 3:7, a powerful verse,

7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives [here it is] in an understanding way, as with someone weaker [some translations say with a weaker vessel] since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Isn't it beautiful the way how God balances things out? The structure of headship and submission does not change but in loving her and purposing to live with her in an understanding way, you elevate her because she is a joint heir with you in Jesus Christ.

So understanding her as a weaker vessel. The idea of understanding here means according to the knowledge of the female. It's not necessarily what's in the vessel, it's the container itself that's different. God put women in a different container. Her soul is as valuable as yours, her soul is as esteemed in God's eyes as your soul, but the vessel is different. It's a different material. She's silk and fine linen, you're canvas and leather. There's a difference and you've got to purpose to work toward understanding her.

In all of the years of counseling approaching four decades now, it's very very clear that the woman just cries more than the man. She's just more emotional. I sometimes tease my wife when we're watching Shark Tank, have you ever watched Shark Tank? And these people, sometimes it's a lady doing business, sometimes it's a man, but almost every time if a lady's on there and she doesn't get a shark to support her project, she gets emotional and that's not wrong, it's just the way God made us. He made us different and we're to live with our wives understanding the difference and rejoicing in the difference.



I've got a little cartoon here. I clipped it out years ago. Have you ever read the Born Loser cartoon? Well, he's on the lake with his wife in a little boat, oars, not a powerboat or anything, just little oars. They're on the lake and the first caption you see them, he and his wife sitting in this little boat on this lake. The next caption you see his face, he's just got a smile, he's contented, he's happy he's there. The next caption has it that the sun is beginning to set and they've been on the lake all day. Then he turns to his wife and says, "Ah, this is the life, spending the entire day fishing from a boat on a secluded lake. What do you think of your first time, Gladys?" She responds, "It's like being in jail with a chance of drowning."

That really hits it, doesn't it? We are different but, guys, if you're born-again with agape love in your heart, you have the capacity. It doesn't mean you can't go spend the day on the lake fishing sometimes but you have the capacity to say no to what you like and commit yourself to meet a legitimate need in your wife's life.

Two or three things just to emphasize the difference. First of all, are we not different in how we view time? I mean, when your wife says, "I'll be ready in a minute," are you going to start the car? It's going to be 30 minutes. You may have seen the episode of Raymond where he told her, "I'm leaving at so-and-so time. I'm just gonna leave." And Raymond actually left her and then he went and talked to his father-in-law and he said, "I told her I was leaving at a certain time." "And you did it, you left?" You don't do that.

Saving money, are we not different in how we view saving? If a husband says, "I saved \$50," he means he put \$50 in the savings account. If the wife says, "I saved \$50," she meant she bought \$100 dress on sale for \$50. 100% true.

Shopping. The easiest way to put a man into depression is say, "I'm going to the mall with you for a day." Honestly, if I go in a store, I feel guilty if the lady gets me one article of clothes to try on. A lady can go in a store and get 500 articles of clothes, try them all on and buy nothing. It's just what you do. My wife tells me it's like hunting, "I go hunting. I'm hunting." And that's what it's like.

How you approach problems is different. The washing machine breaks. Your wife calls you and says, "Honey, the washing machine is broken." I can solve it in about 60 seconds, either mechanical or electrical. If it's mechanical, So-and-so might could help me. If electrical, So-and-so might could help me. We can call this repairman. If not, we'll go down to So-and-so and buy a new one. I'm done with it but your wife wants to think about, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, my child's first clothes were washed in that washing machine. Johnny's first football pants were washed in that washing machine." She takes it through a full range of emotions as she deals with these things in her life.

Here's my statement to us guys: don't try to change her. We don't want women to be guys. We want them to be the women God made them to be. Do what one does when you first see the Grand Canyon, sit back and enjoy the full range of colors, textures and shapes. Think about how beautifully God made women to be different than men. You cannot match her emotionally but you can learn to enjoy her. Women are a violin, men

are a drum. Accept her as she is. Don't try to change her but God may indeed change her. I can guarantee you can't and if you try to, she may conform outwardly but it's not from the heart and it's not worth anything. And it goes the other way around, ladies, too, does it not? If you try to change him, you might nag him into some conformity but it's not from the heart. We don't want that.

Ephesians 5:26-27, do we have that ready to go up, Tommy. Yeah. As he's talking about husbands loving their wives like Christ loved the church and gave himself up, he continues on and he says,

26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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 would be holy and blameless.

So the point is there is a parallel between the way Christ loves his bride, the church, and the way men are to love their wives and he says when Christ loves his bride, the church, he loves her in such a way that he cleanses her, he renews her, he grows her and she becomes an increasing blessing to him. Now he doesn't do it just for himself but that is the blessing. By the way, Christ saves his bride for himself. There is a righteous way a man views his wife as she is going to be a continued blessing to me.

So when we accept her as she is and we learn to serve her and respect her needs and she sees that we're genuine here and we want to be faithful and protect her the way Christ does the church and she grows in that security and that trust, then the woman will begin to reveal the hidden person of the heart. Now she may test you in more mundane things first but if she's totally secure, she will begin to share the inner spots and the wrinkles that text was talking about, those fears, the scars, the insecurities, the disappointments, the hurts, the offenses she has experienced and by talking about them with you, looking at the Scriptures together and praying about them together, you begin to help remove the spots and iron out the wrinkles which causes her to trust even more and a beautiful Spirit-wrought intimacy and oneness grows in the marriage, a marriage and a oneness and a beauty that the world can't understand and God gets the glory.

In closing, one simple statement. Everything hinges on husbands knowing and loving Christ. Every bit of this. Brother Don, every bit of this is contingent upon the new birth. We can't do this. Don't try to just mimic this, you must know and love Jesus Christ. And ladies, for you today, you must too. Do you know him? Do you love him? It all starts there. Have you been born-again? Have you been made new by Jesus Christ? Has your heart really been changed by him? Seek Jesus and know him, love him, and everything else will slowly fall into place.