

How to Encourage Your Incredible Wife & Mother

Ephesians 5

Today is Mother's Day, and husbands and children all over America have been thinking of ways to honor their wives and mothers. There have been meals planned, gifts purchased, and cards written. All of those are wonderful. But the greatest gift that any mother could ever get would be for their husbands and children to encourage them by treating them the way God asks us to in the Scriptures.

The best way to honor someone you love, is to treat them the way God has told us to treat them. God is very specific about how wives and mothers are to be treated. Please join me in Ephesians 5:25 to see just how God wants husbands to love their wife and the mother of their children.

God's Plan for Husbands & Fathers is Clear

The focus of God's plan and design for marriage and family is simple; and the description is short. In Ephesians 5:25 God says that an incredible marriage and family starts with a man who will encourage his wife by loving her in the same way Christ loves His Church. Please stand with me as we read this one verse and pray for this type of love from every husband for his wife and the mother of his children today:

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

As believers, all husbands are representations of Christ. That means that we should want to love and lead like Jesus. Few words can describe the sheer delights of marriage lived in this manner—one day at a time—just as God designed it to be!

Children who see their dads loving their moms this way will be marked for life. They will have actually witnessed a Biblical marriage; and will most likely want to honor their mom (Eph. 6:2) because their fathers did.

How are you doing today at striving to be more like Christ in your relationship with your wife?

You will never get to your destination or goal unless you have a plan for getting there. All unattended marriages begin to slowly decline in closeness, intimacy, fruitfulness, and

blessing.

Therefore, it is a good idea to periodically have a refresher course in what the Lord has to say about our God-designed responsibilities as husbands. God simplifies the plan to just two aspects:

Godly Husbands Encourage as they Love and Lead

God's Word opens with a wedding and closes with a marriage.

Jesus launches His ministry with the first sign miracle at a wedding and Paul compares God's eternal plan for the church to a godly marriage. So there is no lack of magnificence to what we are called to do and be.

Follow along as I read Ephesians 5:22-24 (NKJV):

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

God has given the plan in His Word, and the power by His grace empowering us by His Spirit living within¹. God clearly revealed, as we read through these passages, that the husband has these two primary responsibilities to his wife: loving and leading.

Encouraging Husbands Love with Sacrifice

Love is imperative. That is what the Spirit of God told Paul. Three times, in almost as many verses in Ephesians 5, Paul commands that husbands love their wives. Either they really need love, or we really have trouble loving.

Either way—love is the imperative of a Spirit-led husband's life. Paul says—to help us men who need guidance—to love our wives with the same attention we care for ourselves (Ephesians 5:28, 33); and love them with the same selflessness as Jesus shows His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:25).

We as men carefully protect and provide for the needs of our bodies. We do not deliberately do anything to harm ourselves. When we are hungry, we eat. When we are thirsty, we drink. When we are tired, we sleep.

¹ Some key passages are: Genesis 3:16; Psalms 127-128; Proverbs 5:15-19; 1 Corinthians 7:3-4; Ephesians 5:23-33; Colossians 3:19; Ephesians 5:23; 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12; and 1 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 3:4-5; and 1 Peter 3:7.

Suffice it to say, in other words, that we very carefully and fervently nourish and cherish ourselves. “Well,” Scripture indicates, “this is the way we are to love our wives. We are to nourish them, cherish them, protect them, satisfy them, provide for them, care for them, and sacrifice for them to the same degree and extent, and in the same manner, as we do ourselves.”

That is a high standard of love for a husband to keep, but there is yet a higher standard: “*Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her*” (Ephesians 5:25). Hard as it may sound, we are told to do so by God, so in His power it is possible.

If we want to be godly leaders, and follow Christ’s example, and ask Him to fill us with His love².

So how can we as husbands love our wives with that quality of love? When we learn:

How to Love Our Wife With Christ’s Love

Jesus wants us to intimately know Him; He has promised that He is engaged to us; and will soon return to marry us—all of which speaks of an intensely loving relationship. What are the elements of loving our wives like that? By God’s grace, a husband who believes that his primary ministry is his marriage will faithfully strive to be like Jesus wants him to be.

What are the characteristics of such a man? There are three: intimacy, humility, and transparency.

1. Give Her Your Emotional Intimacy

A husband will encourage his wife as she sees and hears that he cherishes her, and delights in her as a person, just as Christ delights in His bride. (Ephesians 5:28-29)

Part of God’s blueprint for marriage is that husbands are to cleave to their wives. Cleaving means intimacy, which transcends sex; God expects husbands’ lives to encompass every dimension of their beloved wives’ lives—emotionally, spiritually, and physically. This requires just plain old “being around each other.”

Life so often becomes like a busy highway in which marital partners are always heading in different directions. We must choose to stop this “highway mania,” and stay close to each other—in conversation, with eyes locked onto theirs, and most of all with our hearts

² See about humble leaders Ephesians 5:23; 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12; and 1 Corinthians 11:3. Matthew 20:20-28 describes the Bible’s concept of a leader.

listening and sharing.

That is cleaving—intimacy—and that should be our direction. A Word-filled husband allows his wife to share his life fully, for they are *“heirs together of the grace of life”* (1 Peter 3:7).

Cherishing a wife like this leads to a lifelong delight in the one with whom he has developed a genuine understanding of goals, plans, desires, feelings, and fears. Give her your emotional intimacy.

2. Show Her Humility is Your Goal

Encouraging husbands will lead as Jesus did, who Himself was, first and foremost, a servant. John 13:1-15 provides the same picture of leadership. Like Jesus, godly husbands are to lead by being servants. Just as Jesus knelt and washed the feet of His disciples, we kneel in our hearts and humbly serve our wives.

Our emblem of servant leadership is the basin and towel. And the greatest is the one who serves the most. This principle is found as we look in 1 Peter 5:3:

“... nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock”

Nothing can destroy a marriage faster than a husband’s unyielding pride.

Why not practice saying some of these words: *“Honey, let me do the dishes.” “Why don’t you go to the grocery store without the kids, I’ll watch them.”*

This simple, practical way of modeling humility is the very best way to love our wives (and children)! Show her humility is your goal.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, ... He humbled Himself and became obedient [to the point of] death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5, 7a, 8).

3. Practice Transparency as Your Habit

Encouraging husbands, give their wives complete openness, communication, and vulnerability.

Just as Jesus loves us to the end, so we should love our wives.

Just as Jesus will never leave us or forsake us, our wives need to know, feel, and hear from

us of our lifelong loyalty. One of the best ways to encourage our wives is to clearly and regularly say how much they fulfill our lives.

Nothing motivates a godly wife more than knowing that her husband truly needs her. Remember—God designed women to be completers. Wives want to invest their time and strength in what will matter to their husbands in life.

I tell my wife, Bonnie, in every way I can think of, just how much I need her help, her counsel, her companionship, and her presence.

If she loves my time—I give her time; if she loves gifts—I give her something she'll cherish; if she loves words—I give her quiet times of talking about whatever she needs to hear. It is vital that she feels all of her needs are being met in a loving manner.

Telling your wife how much you need her is the greatest thing you can do because she longs to meet your needs!

How to Lead Our Wives Like Jesus Led

God designed men to lead, and women to respond. It is the role of men to initiate and pursue, no matter how hard it may be. Christ's example of gentle, compassionate, servant leadership is a model for all of us who want to be godly husbands and dads.

There are three characteristics of Christ's leadership that each of us men should emulate: sacrifice, kindness, and tenderness.

1. Sacrifice was Christ's method

Turn back to Matthew 20:28 with me. Note Christ's summary of His way of loving the disciples when He says, *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* A godly husband will love his wife by sacrificing to meet her needs. Jesus told us that because God loved, He gave. That gift was the ultimate sacrifice. Husbands are to have that type of sacrificial love as their way of life with their own wives.

One survey of over 700 couples, found that wives indicated their top five love needs as follows: **1.** unconditional love and acceptance, **2.** emotional intimacy and communication, **3.** spiritual intimacy, **4.** encouragement and affirmation, and **5.** companionship.

Human nature is strange. Something in us assumes that if we treat our spouse the way we would like him or her to treat us, we are meeting our partner's needs. But when it comes to needs, the Golden Rule (*"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"*) does not

always apply. Why? Because in many cases a husband's needs are different than a wife's needs. Husbands: Sacrifice for her needs, like Christ shows us.

2. Kindness was in Christ's touch

Encouraging husbands will practice one of the simplest, yet most neglected ways of communicating love—by the tender touches of love. A godly husband will give his wife tenderness, chivalry, and courtesy. If you have never felt the touches of Jesus through the pages of the Gospels—I invite you to take the time to do so³.

Starting in Mark 1:31, note how compassionate and gentle were Christ's hands as He touched with love so many people.

So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

Then look at v. 41 and see how Jesus had a loving touch of kindness. Husbands: Give her the kindness of your touch, like Christ shows us.

3. Tenderness was on Christ's tongue

A godly husband will practice one of the simplest, yet most neglected ways of communicating love—by words spoken kindly, warmly, and directly to his wife. Jesus spoke with such grace that even His enemies confessed in John 7:46: *"No man ever spoke like this Man!"*

Remember those words in verse 2 of C. Austin Mile's hymn "In the Garden"? *He speaks, and the sound of His voice Is so sweet the birds hush their singing; You are probably saying, "I could never be like that!" But that is just the point, we can't, but Christ in us CAN!*

Husbands, what effect do you think demonstrating that same spirit might have on our wives? Since women are so responsive, I imagine that such sweet speech would be *"[like] apples of gold In settings of silver"* to them. (Prov. 25:11)

What a beautiful service of love! His words will be seasoned with the salt of God's grace (Ephesians 5:28, Colossians 3:19, 1 Corinthians 3:4-5). Husbands: give her tenderness in the way you talk to her. Here are some choices to make:

- Refuse to compare her unfavorably with others, especially other women.
- Refuse to use jokes about her, or make cutting remarks to her in front of other

³ There are at least forty passages recording the touches of Jesus. Here are some in the Gospel by Mark: 1:31, 41; 5:41; 6:5; 7:33; 8:23; 9:27; 10:16.

people.

- Choose to speak to her in a gentle and respectful way, and treat her as he would a valuable jewel.

Personally, I have chosen to believe that Bonnie is the dearest friend I'll ever have on earth—and I treat her that way, think of her that way, and talk about her in that way!

Finally, here is perhaps the most encouraging gift of all. Turn back with me to Proverbs 31:28. This verse has always been my goal since my earliest days as a husband.

Give Her Praise as Your Gift

Many people talk about the “Proverbs 31 Woman”, but few men strive to be the Proverbs 31:28 **husband**: *“Her husband ... praises her.”*

Shouldn't we likewise practice that grace until it becomes part of our daily life? It is so rewarding to see the long-term results!

Proverbs 31:28 is the only Scripture I know of that describes the way a godly husband speaks in public about his wife.

Are you doing what God says?

Are you also praising your wife in front of your children?

That is the way of the godly, tender servant-leader!

Get Started Now

On this Mother's Day, will you give your wife and the mother of your children the gift God has asked you to give?

You have a specific calling—love your wife, and sacrificially lead her—just as Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us. This is not a fact to learn; it is a lifestyle to live. And as Jesus said, it is not those who say they love, but those who show it—that really love (John 14:21, Philippians 2:12-13, James 1:19-24).

Just as with every other facet of our spiritual lives, we must repent and go back to where we got off the path.

Christ's course for each of us to follow is so clear.

If you have lost the joy, lost the vibrancy of your daily walk with your wife, repent and go

back to where you veered away.

- Humbly agree with God that you have failed. Ask for the cleansing of forgiveness (1 John 1:9; Matthew 5:23-24; James 5:16). Then sit (or even better—shock your wife and kneel with her) and pray for God to forgive your failures and give you a fresh start together.
- Start over again by remembering that God is the God of New Beginnings (Lamentations 3:23). By God’s grace, the whole life of a believer is but “a series of new beginnings.”
- Realize that marriage is just like every other dimension of our life in Christ—it only works by the power of the Spirit. Yield to Him, and ask for the fullness of His power to bear the fruit of love in your life, your marriage, and in your family (Galatians 5:16, 22-23).