

United, for Good Ephesians 5:29-33

Introduction

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.

These verses present three couplets—three sets of two verbs—to describe the way a marriage union should be for good.

1. Nourish and Cherish Like Jesus Does Us (29-30)
2. Leave Others and Cleave to Each Other (31-32)
3. Love Your Wife and Reverence Your Husband (33)

1. Nourish and Cherish Like Jesus Does Us (29-30)

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.

“Whenever the husband’s headship mirrors the headship of Christ, then the wife’s submission to the protection and provision of his love, far from detracting from her womanhood, will positively enrich it.” John Stott, 226

We naturally take care of our bodies. Not perfectly, but we at least feed and clothe it, provide it rest. In general do what we think will cause it pleasure and not pain.

Nourish—the process of bringing children up to maturity, providing for them what they need to grow

Cherish—to show affection and tender love

As Christ does the church—suddenly we are in the category of perfect loving care.

We don’t always take adequate care of our bodies, but Christ has never failed to care for His church. We are members of His body, and that connection brings us blessings He alone deserves. He has said He will never ever leave us or forsake us. His sanctifying work in us will culminate in our immortality and sinlessness, and the full enjoyment of a universe made new, where righteousness has taken up residence. It is our marriage to Him

that brings this infinite wealth and joy into our lives, and it will last forever.

Husbands, would you describe your care for your wife and nourishing and cherishing her as Christ does the church?

Could your wife describe your love for her that way?

2. Leave Others and Hold Fast to Each Other (31-32)

³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

So close is this bond that it surpasses even that of parent and child. Remarkable.

A mother carries her children inside her before they're born. They have a life-giving connected to her. The Biblical word for compassion is defined as the kind of deep compassion a mother has for the child in her womb.

The marriage bond is to stronger yet. A man is to leave his father and mother and hold fast—be glued—to his wife.

A married couple must remember that their bond together is greater than even parent-child. That goes for their relationship to their

own parents, and that goes for their relationship to their own children.

Many a couple drifts apart personally, with nothing but the kids holding them together. When the kids are gone, there's no glue left, and it's not uncommon for the marriage to fall apart. Sadly, of course, the relationship can fall apart before the children are grown.

Here's the point. A husband and wife must see to it that they nurture the bond—the glue—between them. If their closeness is greater than even parent and child, then it certainly should be greater than any other relationship as well. Such closeness takes intentionality and giving up oneself for your spouse. It takes vigilance to see to it that no other relationship, including with our children, surpasses our relationship to our spouse.

Our children are most secure and best served when our relationship is close like it should be.

These words in verse 31 come from Genesis 2:21-24

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. **23** Then the man

said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

God created the closeness of husband and wife in the Garden of Eden. God made woman from man. In the generations that have followed, God makes man from woman. When Paul discusses the husband's headship over his wife in 1 Corinthians 11, he notes this mutual interdependence.

"Becoming one flesh" refers to more than just the physical closeness God limits to the marriage relationship. Rather that physical union is to express the full union of husband and wife to the degree that they both live for the benefit of one another just as a head and body function together for the mutual benefit.

Ephesians 5:32

This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Mystery—what once was hidden and now is revealed.

The last time Paul used this term in Ephesians he was discussing the union of Jew and Gentile into one body as the church.

Christ and His entire church are also one. The church gladly submits to Him as its Savior. And He has given Himself up on the cross out of love for His bride, to cause the church to flourish so that it reaches perfect holiness and beauty through the washing of the Word.

A Christian marriage is to put this mystery on display so that it is no longer hidden.

Would people come to understand some measure of Christ's love for His church and its submission to Christ by watching how you and your spouse live together?

3. Love Your Wife and Reverence Your Husband (33)

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Paul is reiterating the way a husband and wife each give of themselves for the other. The husband is to lead with self-sacrificing love. His headship is not to crush his wife but to do all things for her benefit so that she flourishes and attains all she could be.

Paul uses a synonym for submit this time when he talks about a wife's self-giving for the sake of her husband.

Respect—sometimes translated fear or reverence; often used in reference to the fear

of God. The usage of the term has some range. A profound awe and adoration of God combined with a genuine fear to disobey Him because of the disruption it would cause to the relationship. A wife treats her husband as the church treats Christ. She does not want to do what would dishonor Him or displease Him. So I chose the word "reverence" because it carries more of the flavor of the term. "Respect" sometimes just means a forced honor, like to a government official that is personally unworthy but that you have to show deference to. "Respect" works here if by it we mean something like treating every human being with respect because he or she is made in God's image.

A wife treats her husband this way, not because he's perfect like Christ is, but she does it as to the Lord for God's glory. That gives a heart-felt dimension. The same way every Christian is to live life in humility and love because of who Christ is.

Does your wife know you love her with a heart of self-sacrifice?

Does your husband know you reverence him and are glad to yield to his leadership?

Conclusion

This kind of marriage may seem a tall order in a culture that for years has devalued

marriage and sabotaged it. But in Christ, it should be the norm, not the exception.

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