

Ephesians 5:25-33 Answers Husbands Love Your Wives

Family Life Overview: In this section on the family (5:22-6:4) we'll see three simple guidelines for the various roles with the family: husbands love, wives submit, children obey. The God given roles in marriage are not 50/50 with one spouse doing his part if the other does her part. Rather, the roles are 100/0. Each partner is to obey Jesus' commands regardless of the failings of the other spouse.

******What two standards for loving their wives are husbands given in 5:25-33?** Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church and as they do their own bodies.

1. Husbands are commanded to love (*agapao*) their wives (5:25). It is an imperative. What difference would it make as to which Greek word for love is here (5:25)? There are several Greek words for love. Though there is considerable overlap between some of them, differences remain. For example, *epithumia* (intense heat, basis for "thermos") really is just physical lust (as with animals in heat). Another word, *eros*, is the Greek word for romantic, passionate, emotional, sentimental love ("erotic" comes from *eros*). Yet another word, *storgé*, carries the idea of a comfortable, secure relationship that carries a sense of belonging. The two other words, *philé* and *agapé* are virtual synonyms. If there is a difference, it would be that *philé* is more of a natural affection, a love between friends. Thus, Philadelphia is the city of brotherly love. It is camaraderie. If *epithumia* and *eros* make lovers, then *philé* makes friends. The New Testament seems to use *agapé* as the highest form of love (though in reality it can be used synonymously with *philé*). *Agapé* is ultimately more volitional than it is emotional. In the final analysis it is not dependent on feelings because emotions can't be commanded. *Agapé* is a commitment to benefit the other person regardless of his response. It has been called an unselfish love.

Application: People get married for a lot of different reasons. Sometimes after the marriage occurs, those reasons no longer exist. People say they are no longer in love. Usually what is meant is that the romance is gone, or the sexual attraction is gone or that they simply no longer like who they married. They file for divorce because they are not happy. The Bible commands husbands to love (*agapé*) their wives. Biblical love is not merely a feeling. It is a commitment. It is in sickness and in health, for richer, for poorer, for better or for worse. It is until death do us part. **Men:** You are capable of loving your wife because God commands you to do it. It is a covenantal love/loyalty.

Truth: Studies reveal that two-thirds of unhappy marriages will become happy within five years if people stay married and do not get divorced. *Agapé* commitment is what keeps couples together during the rough patches. It keeps you in the relationship when your feelings flag because you made the decision to love (Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, p. 87).

— As Christ Loved the Church —

Review: What first example of how the husband should love his wife is given in 5:25? He should love his wife as Christ loved the church. This means that our belief about how a man should love his wife will be determined by our theology of how Christ loved the church. This is one reason why doctrine is important.

To Make You Like Jesus: Tim Keller wrote that the mission of marriage is to make both husband and wife like Christ. A husband loving his wife as Christ loved the church will make him like Christ (*The Meaning of Marriage*). The wife is asked to be like Jesus in that He submitted to the Father and she is to submit to her husband.

Men are to love their wives in a self-sacrificial manner. Husbands are to be servant-leaders, even as Jesus came to earth as a servant (Philippians 2). The husband is not to lord it over his wife. “In Jesus we see the authoritarianism of authority laid to rest, and all the humility of submission glorified’ (Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, p. 178).

According to 5:25, how did Christ show his love for the church (5:25)? (*Reread aloud*). He gave Himself up for her, that is, Christ died for the church.

2. In what sense will a loving husband give himself up for his wife (5:25)? See *1 Corinthians 7:32-33*, *1 Peter 3:7*. On a rare occasion a husband will need to die on behalf of his wife, but most of the time this means giving himself up through serving her, meeting her needs, caring for her. This means death to self. It is a sacrifice.

A single man is free to do things to an extent a married man can't: sports, camping, hunting, golfing, hobbies, time spent advancing his career, time devoted to academic pursuits, even ministry. He does what he wants to do, when he wants to do it. A married man must consider the needs of his wife.

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:32-33 . . . The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided.

Men: Are you selfish or Christ-like in how you spend your time? Your wife is not simply a roommate with sexual privileges. Getting married is a deal changer. When you say, “I do”, times really have changed. Individualism has no place in marriage. Marriage is not a situation of two individuals living together where one is in charge of the other. Rather, it is an organic union where the two are made into one flesh. There is no room for macho-man foolishness (Wilson, *Federal Head*, p. 18). Imagine a man who gets mad at his left arm and declares when he wears a coat that he will only put his right arm in the sleeve and leave his left arm exposed.

Based on 5:25-27, why did Christ die for the church? Christ died for the church in order to sanctify the church, to clean the church through the washing of the word, to present the church to Himself in splendor (without spot or wrinkle), to be holy and without blemish.

The Gospel: The Gospel is the good news that Christ died for the church, to cleanse us of our sins and make us holy. His death on the cross was substitutionary, in our place. It was propitiatory; it appeased God's wrath against sin. Since He is infinite God, Jesus could suffer in a few hours on the cross what it would take us, who are finite, an infinity to suffer in hell.

NIV 2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

ESV Isaiah 1:18 . . . though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Ecclesiology: In 5:26-27, Paul seems to have momentarily left the subject of the husband's role in the family and digressed onto the subject of the church.

3. What does sanctify mean (5:26)? It means to make holy (to "holify"). This, in the Greek, is the verb form for the noun holy. It means to consecrate to the Lord's service (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 2272). It is God's will that you be holy.

ESV 1 Thessalonians 4:3 . . . this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality . . .

From Gory to Glory: One of the purposes of marriage is to sanctify us, to have the same character in us that was in Jesus. Your spouse knows you better than anyone else and he/she will be the primary person God uses to point out your sins and weaknesses and flaws (harshness, pride, inflexibility, lacking self-control, being oblivious, being a perfectionist, impatience, irritability, being overly independent, being miserly, insensitivity, or being overbearing). These faults will pose a real problem for your spouse and God will use your spouse to help you work on them. God wants to take you from your gory self to your glory self (Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, p. 134ff)! Expectations are important: expect God to use your spouse to help you see your weaknesses.

4. What is the washing of the word (5:26)? This may parallel an ancient custom of a ceremonial bridal bath before her wedding. Some people feel that for the church this refers to water baptism, which symbolically washes away our sins. "Word" may refer to the Gospel message or perhaps a baptismal formula (such as, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"). **Side application:** All believers need to be baptized! Perhaps this refers to the cleansing of being exposed to Scripture as it is taught regularly.

When will the church reach this state of splendor, without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish (5:27)? This will not be achieved until Jesus returns. This clearly is God's goal for the church.

5. How would what Jesus did for the church (5:26-27) apply to husbands? Admittedly, that is a tough act to follow! Although it does seem that Paul digressed into the God's goal for the church, this still has application for husbands. Christ took responsibility for the sins of his bride and He did what it took to make her holy. In that same sense, the husband is responsible for what is happening with his wife spiritually and is love bound to do everything he can to help her in her walk with the Lord. The husband is responsible for all the problems in a marriage, simply because he is the husband, the one in charge. Of course the wife has personal responsibilities before God, and the husband may not be to blame, but the husband is still the head and must assume responsibility for the state of his marriage (Douglas Wilson, *Federal Husband*, p. 12). This is why, theologically, Adam gets the total blame for the Fall (even though they both sinned).

6. Why it is significant that, in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, the wife is instructed to ask her husband at home if she has any questions? The husband is the head of the wife. He is to nourish his wife spiritually and in every other area. The husband is responsible for teaching his own wife. The husband is to be the resident theologian in his home. He is the teacher and pastor of his home. If a wife asks the teacher a question during church, rather than her husband, it weakens his position as the resident theologian in his home.

— As His Own Body —

What second standard for loving their wives are husbands given in 5:28? See 5:23. Just as Christ loves the church, which is His body, so too husbands are to love their wives as they do their own bodies.

7. Why is it true that he who loves his wife loves himself (5:28)? See 5:31. This harkens back to Genesis 2:24. In marriage, the two become one flesh (quoted in 5:31).

What words are used in 5:29 to describe how a husband should relate to his wife? A man should nourish and cherish his wife just as Christ does the church.

8. What does it mean for a husband to nourish his wife (5:29)? From *ektripho* which fundamentally means to feed. Of course a husband should provide food for his wife, but more than that he is to nourish her emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, mentally and in every other way. Imagine a man who only gets two weeks of vacation per year and uses it rafting down the Colorado River with his buddies, leaving his wife home alone with the kids — *every year!* Guys, you can't be detached from your wives. You have to be involved, you have to engage, you have to think about this. This is your God given job.

Example: A man cares for his body constantly, not sporadically. Image a man who only takes his body out to eat once a year on its his birthday or who or gives it a present on its anniversary. No, a man's relationship with his body is much more on-going; he cares for his body in one way or another every minute of every day. So too the husband is to love and care for his wife as his own body. He is to pay attention to her (Wilson, *Federal Head*, p. 23). Wake up! Tune in! Don't be a dope!

Philippians 4:19 states, “God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Husbands are to do the same for their wives.

9. What does it mean for a man to cherish his wife (5:29)? See *Colossians 3:19* and *1 Peter 3:7*. To cherish means to hold dear, to show love for, to cultivate with care and affection. It is from *thalpo* which literally means to keep warm. From this came the idea of fostering with tender care. It is translated as “taking care” in *1 Thessalonians 2:7*.

ESV 1 Thessalonians 2:7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

ESV Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

ESV 1 Peter 3:7 . . . husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Men simply cannot remain blockheads as it relates to their wives. Men are called upon to study and understand their wives.

Men, how have you honored your wife lately? If we asked her right now, today, would she say that she feels honored?

Christ nourishes and cherishes each of us because we are members of his body: the church. Just as each person takes care of his own body, and just as Christ takes care of the church, so too husbands are to take care of their wives.

Example: It has been all too rightly said that the difference between men and boys is the price of their toys. Some husbands have never learned to deny themselves: if they want a boat, they buy it (or a new rifle or fancy car or pickup truck or to take an expensive hunting expedition or a motorcycle, etc.) while their wives have to struggle to dress themselves or set the table and their homes are falling down around them. This is not of Christ.

ESV 1 Timothy 5:8 . . . if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Application: Any single man who is not able to provide a wife with food and shelter is not qualified to get married. In a time when more women are qualified to take a wife than men are, it is no wonder than gender confusion is rampant (Wilson, *Federal Head*, p. 32). The idea of “Mr. Mom”, where the man stays home with the kids and the wife works, is not biblical.

10. In what sense should a man leave his father and mother when he takes a wife (5:31)?

This speaks of priority. Marriage is to be the primary relationship in a person's life. When a couple marries, a new household is started. New loyalties are made. The new wife is to have priority over the man's mother or father. Some men are mama's boys; after marriage it is time for the umbilical cord to be cut! Parental love is to be surpassed by marital love (yet parents are still to be honored).

11. In what way are a husband and wife one flesh (5:31)? See 1 Corinthians 7:2-5. This probably has several meanings. Physically it refers to the man and woman coming together after getting married. Socially, the husband and wife are in the same boat. They are to identify with each other. When a woman marries a man she takes on his last name, because they are one. Spiritually, there is a mystical oneness (bond). Commentator John Eadie observed that this is "the only bliss of Paradise that has survived the fall" (Eadie, *Greek Text Commentaries: Ephesians*, p. 431).

ESV 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 . . . because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

12. What profound mystery did Paul reveal in 5:32? The mystery is that God created husband and wife to be one flesh in anticipation of the union that would one day exist between Christ and his bride, the church. There is nothing cultural about these instructions for man and wife; they date from creation and are reflective of the relationship between Christ and the church.

Marriage was invented by God. If we decide to run it our way, instead of God's way, we are courting disaster.

Why did Paul begin 5:33 with the word "however"? Paul digressed from his original topic of marriage when he wrote about the church, but now in verse 33 the "however" signaled a return to this original theme.

13. What concluding remarks did Paul have for marriage (5:33)? Men are to love their wives as themselves and wives are to respect their husbands. Each command is appropriate to the gender. Women need love and men need respect.

Love Languages: People express and feel love in different ways. Some show love by spending time with a person, some by hugging and touching, some by giving things to the person or doing things for the person. The husband's job is to love the wife. It is important for the wife to feel loved. If she speaks one love language and the husband speaks another, she may not feel loved. There is a joke about a man who said to his wife, "I told you I loved you when we got married, and if that ever changes, I'll let you know." The husband must know his wife well enough to know her love language and speak to her in her own language.

Wives: Show respect to your husband. Make him feel respected. Aretha Franklin sang, “R-E-S-P-E-C-T, Find out what it means to me”. Her song became a popular with the feminist movement. However, Scripture indicates that it is the men who need respect much more than women do.

So What?

14. What standards did Paul set before husbands as to how they should love their wives?

It does not matter how badly your wife has sinned against you. Your wife’s past sins do you hurt you nearly as much as your own sins hurt Jesus. Yet Jesus forgave your sins. So too husbands are to love their wives, regardless of past hurts. As was pointed out last lesson, the gender roles in marriage are not 50/50 with each spouse doing his part if the other does too. Rather, God’s design is 100/0 with each spouse doing his part regardless of the failings of the other.

ESV **Romans 5:8** . . . God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

ESV **Romans 5:10** . . . while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son . . .

What profound mystery does marriage picture?

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people’s minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

Teacher’s note: These lessons are based on the ESV and are designed for 45 minute sessions. If you can hand out or email out each lesson’s questions a week in advance it will encourage people to think about the passage during the week. Covering each question in class will give importance to the questions and give incentive for the class to spend time preparing for the discussion.

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