

God's Word to Husbands

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[0 : 0 0] Today we have two scripture readings. The first scripture reading will be taken from Genesis chapter 2 verses 18-25.

Verse 18-25.

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[3 : 3 6] Verse 18-25.

Lord, would you help me to be faithful to bring your word to your people in general, but to husbands in particular.

And Father, I pray that your voice will be heard above my voice. Speak to our hearts now for our good and for the glory of your great name.

It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. When you think of love between a man and a woman, what comes to mind? I imagine for the women, what comes to mind are expressions of romantic love.

[6 : 2 5] And for most men, what comes to mind are expressions of erotic love.

But I doubt when I ask you to think about love between a man and a woman, I doubt any of us thought about these words that we find in Ephesians chapter 5.

That God commends and indeed commands husbands to follow in their love for their wives.

And the reason it doesn't naturally come to mind is because it is unnatural. It is uncommon when we think of love between a man and a woman and a husband and a wife to automatically think in these terms.

Husbands do not naturally love their wives in the ways that we have heard read this morning. Indeed, the reason that we don't is we don't have the natural capacity to love our wives in this way.

[7 : 4 1] We have a natural capacity to exhibit emotional love. We have a natural capacity to exhibit biological love to our wives. When it comes to exhibiting this self-giving, self-sacrificing love that husbands are called to, this is not something we do naturally.

We need grace for this. We need transforming grace in our lives and in our hearts to cause us to love our wives in this way.

And so this morning, in our remaining time, I want to consider the self-giving, self-sacrificing love that God calls husbands to. And I want to do so under two simple headings.

The first is the husband's duty. As we consider these words to husbands from the Lord, nine verses in Ephesians 5, it should immediately occur to us that the Lord uses far more words to commend the duty of husbands to them than he does to commend the duty of wives to them.

If the Lord followed the pattern of speaking to husbands as he did to wives, he would say something like, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.

[9 : 23] As Christ loved the church, so must husbands love their wives. He would say something like that because that matches what he says to wives to submit to their husbands.

But he doesn't do that. What he does is he not only calls husbands to love their wives, but he fills it out for them. He graphically fills it out for them.

He helps them to see what it looks like. He doesn't do that with the wives. He simply says to the wives, submit to your husbands and everything. When it comes to the husbands, he goes to profound and graphic details to communicate to us what that looks like.

As it relates to wives and the submission they're called to have to their husbands, there could be some debate because God doesn't fill it out. Not so for the husbands. And I don't know if it's because we're slower.

I don't know if we just would not get it. But the Lord does not leave us to ourselves to figure out what it looks like for me to love my wife.

[10 : 40] And then we all have our brands of what that looks like. And we believe we have some individual leeway to determine that. But God tells us what it looks like.

And fellow husbands and future husbands, we need to hear fresh these words from the Lord. In these verses, Paul uses two pictures to communicate the love that husbands are supposed to have for their wives.

The first picture is a picture of a bride. But not just any bride. It's Christ's bride. The church.

And we see this in verses 25 to 27. If you've ever been associated with a wedding, a traditional wedding in particular, you know the kind of effort and attention that goes into preparing a bride to be presented to her husband on her wedding day.

Every effort is made to cause her to look her very best. And when we look at these verses, this is the idea behind them.

[11 : 51] But the difference is Christ is the one who is preparing the bride, the church, for her wedding day to present her to himself when he returns.

Let's look at those verses again. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

That he might sanctify her. That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. 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. Immediately what comes to mind is Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

His sacrifice on the cross for his bride, the church. Christ willingly and knowingly ascended on Calvary's hill to give his wife, his life for his bride, for the church.

[13 : 04] Christ died for the good of the church. He died for the good of those who collectively would be his bride. And Paul reminds us.

The justice Christ gave himself for the church to sanctify her, to cleanse her, to wash her. To purify her, to present her to himself without spot, without wrinkle, without blemish or any such thing.

He says, so must husbands follow in his example in self-giving sacrifice. To love their wives.

Husbands are called to mirror to their wives Christ's self-giving, self-sacrificing love. And that's why it says it in verse 25.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. So, fellow husbands, future husbands, in marriage, it is our duty to love our wives self-sacrificially for their good.

[14 : 24] And their highest good, the highest good that we can sacrifice for is their spiritual good.

That they may know Christ. That they may grow in their knowledge of Christ. That they may grow in godliness. That they may grow in sanctification.

And this takes sacrifice. First, it takes sacrifice on our own part. To be following Christ in this way. To grow to know him. To love him. To serve him.

And then to help our wives to do the same. It takes time. Indeed, this takes a lifetime. This is our lifetime duty.

That we are called to to love our wives in this way. For Christ, it's a lifetime endeavor. Because for the entirety of our lives, he is working in us.

[15 : 25] He is sanctifying us. Conforming us more into his own image. And our task, brothers, is the same. For the entirety of the lives of our wives.

For the entirety of our own lives, we have to give ourselves for the spiritual good and growth of our wives. Well, that's the first picture.

The second picture that Paul gives us is the picture of a body. And not just anybody. It's the picture of a husband's body. Look at again what he says in verses 28 to 30.

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ does the church.

Because we are members of his body. So fellow husbands and future husbands, this is a call to love our wives in the same way that we love our own bodies.

[16 : 42] That shouldn't escape any of us. The point is very clear. And I think unless we're not well in our minds and in our souls, we love our bodies.

We want them to look good. We want them to feel good. And we go to great lengths and even great costs and sacrifice to invest in taking care of our bodies.

These verses remind us that we naturally nourish and cherish our bodies. We do all that we can to protect our bodies and to keep them out of harm's way.

We would not injure our bodies. We would not mistreat our bodies. And the point that Paul is making is that the husband and the wife are one flesh.

And the husband who truly understands this one flesh union treats his wife the way he treats his own body. And therefore no right-thinking man would mistreat his wife when he understands that his wife is his own body.

[18 : 01] He cares for his body and he will care for his wife. Nourishing, the way we nourish our bodies with food, the way we cherish our bodies, we do the same for our wives.

And Paul uses very strong words to communicate the kind of care that we are to have for our wives. Nourishing them, cherishing them.

Fellow husbands, what are some of the things we cherish? There's nothing on this earth that we should cherish more than we cherish our wives.

The wives that God has given to us are the greatest and most precious gift that he has given to us.

In the same way that God presented to Adam a wife that was tailor-made for him, that was suited for him, God in his own providence has brought to us the wives who are suited for us.

[19 : 07] He's given them to us and he says to us, you are to cherish her. You're to nourish her. You're to help her in flourishing into the person that God has created her to be.

Now how does this one flesh union happen? Well it happens when a husband and a wife are fulfilling their God-given duty in marriage.

The husband loving his wife. The wife submitting to her husband as unto Christ. And one of the questions that has come up over the years as we have talked about this, is which one comes first?

Does the husband love his wife first and then his wife submits to him? Or does the wife submit to the husband and because she submits really well, then he loves her?

Hopefully the answer is very clear. It is the husband's duty to first love his wife. And we model that from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who loved us before he called us to submit to him.

[20 : 24] Indeed, we love him because he first loved us. And the love of Christ in us is a reciprocal love.

It is a love that was sown into us from Christ. And when we think about the submission of a wife, the submission of a wife is rooted in love.

It's supposed to be rooted in love. Not rooted primarily in duty, but rooted in love. And when we as husbands love our wives, what is returned to us as love is their ruling submission.

It is interesting that we don't find any command in Scripture to wives to love their husbands. We know that they do.

But it is a reciprocal love. It is a love that has been sown that we husbands get to reap from. Sometimes the harvest doesn't come as readily or as easily where there have been years of neglect of the ground of the hearts of our wives that have been hardened by our lack of love, our lack of concern, our lack of care.

[21 : 58] And the truth is that sometimes in a fallen world, even when there has not been that lack of love and care and regard, sometimes the love that is sown by husbands, they don't get to reap from.

That's just one of the realities of living in a fallen world. But husbands, we are still called to patiently and faithfully love our wives as Christ loved the church.

One of the best ways that we can think through how to do this by the grace of God is to think of our own relationship with the Lord and to think of His patience with us, the way He bears with us, the way He endures with us.

And He loves us. We don't have to question His love for a single moment. And we're reminded that we are to mirror the same love to our wives.

And so fellow husbands, when you think of your duty to love your wife in self-giving and in self-sacrificing and in self-caring ways, self-giving ways, honestly, how are you doing?

[23 : 27] Before the Lord, how are you doing? Do you demonstrate care and concern for her general well-being? Have you sacrificed and given of yourself to benefit her, first of all, spiritually?

What are your efforts to help her to grow in godliness? And that's more than criticizing. That's doing something constructive and something that involves our own effort to cause them to grow in the Christ-likeness.

And you know, the reality is this. Whatever peculiarities our wives have, a wise and sovereign God has given them to us and said, you love them the way Christ loves the church.

Are you living as an example before your wife in what godliness looks like? Are you praying with her?

Are you taking time to read and share God's word with her? Are you confessing your sins to her?

[24 : 55] In particular, sins against her. And in so doing, giving her an example to do the same. are you taking advantage of the Lord's day to worship together and to turn our hearts towards the things of God and to feed our souls and in so doing, to cause us to grow in our love for our wives.

one of the ongoing ways that we have to grow in and to be encouraged in loving our wives is to hear the gospel and to meditate on the gospel.

Because in the gospel, we see the patient love of Jesus Christ. We see the amazing love of Jesus Christ to the undeserving, to us.

And then we are called to mirror that to our wives. As I thought about this, how we would seek to benefit our wives in an ongoing way, I really believe that the foundational activity, brothers, that we must be engaged in is to be praying with our wives.

It is the foundational activity that we must be engaged in to demonstrate and communicate our love for our wives, our concern for our wives in terms of the duty that is laid out here for us.

[26 : 41] We need to be praying together with our wives in a regular way. This is not just my idea. Here with the apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 3, verse 7.

He says, Likewise, 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.

Here in this verse, the apostle Peter assumes that prayer is taking place between husbands and wives. When he refers to your prayers, your is plural.

So he's referring to the prayers of the husband and the wife together as they pray together as joint heirs of the grace of life.

And Peter lays the responsibility on us husbands. He lays this responsibility on us to live with our wives in an understanding way, to show honor to them as the weaker vessel, not inferior, but just recognizing that a wise God made men and women differently, that he made men stronger physically.

[28 : 09] He made men stronger constitutionally even to contemplate going into danger, going into hardship. And it's unthinkable that we would put our wives in difficulty and in danger and in hardship.

And so he's saying you are to understand them, live with them in a way, preferring them because of the way God has made them.

But he says you are to be heirs together of the grace of life. And he says do this so that your prayers are not hindered. And prayers can be hindered in one of two ways in general.

One, when we're not getting on with our spouses, we don't want to pray with them. And prayers are hindered. And then when we're not living with them as we ought to in an understanding way, in a caring way, in a self-giving way, our prayers will be hindered.

It'll be praying up to the ceiling and the prayers falling down as an expression of God's non-approval. of that kind of conduct.

[29 : 34] Fellow husbands, God lays this responsibility upon us to live with our wives in this way. And husbands, if you're not praying with your wives in a regular way, I encourage you to do so.

you will notice noticeable, unmeasurable change in your relationship with your wife if you will take seriously this duty to pray with your wife in an ongoing way.

Now, this love that we are called to mirror to our wives, is not all spiritual. It's practical and tangible as well.

And so, for example, in our culture, an overwhelming majority of wives work outside of the home. and yet, the primary responsibility and burden for the home falls on our wives.

They're the ones who have this primary responsibility for the cooking and the caring of the home and if they're young children in particular, caring for those young children.

[31 : 01] And husbands, part of loving our wives is being mindful of this. Being mindful of the burdens that are on our wives and seeking to do all that we can to alleviate it, whether that is chipping in and helping with those household chores, or whether that is getting someone from the outside to come in and to assist with those household chores, but doing so is an expression of care and love for our wives.

And the same can be said for wives who stay at home. They do need this awareness. I learned very early on in our marriage, one of the things you never do to a stay-at-home wife is come and say, what have you done all day?

You don't do that. I've heard some women who have had both experiences say it is easier to go out to work than to stay at home.

And so we ought not overlook the need to care for wives as well who stay at home. Another practical area that we need to consider is how we handle money.

Because how we handle money in our marriages can communicate how we care for or do not care for our wives. and husbands, we're not fulfilling our duty in loving our wives when it comes to spending money for ourselves, we think nothing of it, but when it comes to spending money on our wives, we hesitate or even outright refuse to do so.

[32 : 56] That's not an expression of care for our wives. Another practical area is how we conduct ourselves towards our wives, how we handle them, how we treat them, how we speak to them.

Apostle Paul in Colossians 3.19 says, husbands, love your wives and don't be harsh with them. why does he address husbands as a category, as a group, wholesale, and he zeroes in on this particular issue, do not be harsh with them.

The reason is because harshness is a sin that comes to us naturally as husbands and it is rooted in the fall. It is rooted in the fall of mankind.

Because of the fall, Adam no longer wanted to lovingly lead his wife, but he wanted to just arbitrarily lord over his wife. In the same way that wives, because of the fall, do not naturally desire to submit to their husbands, but instead to usurp their husbands' authority.

And how easy it is in that design for us to be harsh with our wives, to be less than considerate of them, to treat them as an underling under our authority.

[34 : 40] And I think it also points to the fact that part of being a husband, part of loving our wives, also includes correcting our wives. And not to say that wives can't correct husbands, wives correct husbands as well.

But sometimes our correction can be harsh and not gentle. Our correction can be impatient. And only Christ's work in us and Christ's example before us can help us to be gentle with our wives as an expression of our love for them.

I realize a sermon like this could cause husbands to feel like they have a million things to do. And I don't want that because that would just make everyone immobile.

I have two applications I want us to consider in terms of what it looks like to love our wives. And the first is this.

Husbands, let's have a conversation with our wives. Let's have a conversation with our wives about this sermon. And let's share with them any way that the Lord may have convicted us about anything, any aspect of the sermon.

[36 : 06] Certainly, if we were convicted in specific ways where we have sinned, let's confess our sins to our wives. And by the grace of God, let's commit to change.

And also, let's commit not to defend ourselves. Let's commit to listen. Let's commit to hear. And wives, this is not that moment you've been waiting for to tell your husband everything that's on your mind.

instead, I'd encourage you to start with encouragement, start with commendation, ways that you can encourage him, ways that you can commend him.

And then graciously share with him observations that you might have for him, where he might grow, and even how you might help him to grow. And husbands, this conversation requires humility on our part.

And it requires intentionality because we need to initiate it. Wives, it's not for you to remind them, but you know we're supposed to have this conversation. But let us initiate it, and let us be faithful to do it.

[37 : 20] Let's humble ourselves before our wives, humble ourselves before the Lord, and let's have the conversation. And you know what? There's no better day than today.

And then the second application is to encourage us to pray with our wives.

I encourage you to have this conversation with your wife to settle. If you're not praying together, what can praying together look like for you in the season of life you're in, the schedule that you have, that you will pray together?

I know for me and Alexian, what works best for us is weekdays in the mornings. It's not anything super long, maybe ten minutes sometimes, maybe a bit more if we have more concerns to pray about.

But again, husbands, this is a lifetime duty that we have. We will fulfill it. We're called to fulfill it until the day of our death, until the day the Lord returns, or he calls our wives home.

[38 : 37] So that's the husband's duty, to mirror to his wife Christ's love for the church. But in this passage, not only do we see the husband's duty in marriage, we also see the husband's goal in marriage.

And this is my second and final point. The husband's duty in marriage is to mirror to his wife Christ's love for the church, and the husband's goal in marriage is to mirror to the world Christ's relationship with the church.

This is the point that Paul makes in verses 31 and 32. Look again at how he says it. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. Paul, in essence, is saying all that I just said to you can be summarized in this verse.

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying it refers to Christ and the church.

[40 : 04] Paul quotes in verse 31. It's a direct quote from the first passage that was read this morning.

The Genesis passage. The first marriage. And the apostle Paul points out that marriage is a one flesh union between a man and his wife.

But it's important how he says it. Notice that Paul doesn't say, therefore, a man and a woman are to leave their father and mother and cleave to one another, and they shall become one flesh.

He doesn't say that. He clearly doesn't say a wife should do that, but he says, therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Paul says this is a mystery. Now, when we think of mystery, we think of something that is unknown. that's the way the Bible uses mystery.

[41 : 23] The way the Bible uses mystery is it is something that was previously concealed that God has now revealed. It is something that God intentionally concealed, and in redemptive history, over time, he reveals what it is.

and what the apostle Paul is saying, he said, what God did back in Genesis, what he did with bringing this man and this woman into this one-flesh covenantal union, he says, it was not just about marriage.

He said, that was about Christ and the church. That's the mystery that's been revealed. God knew all along when he brought this man and this woman together, when he created the institution of marriage, God knew all along that what this is about is about Christ and the church.

And many, many centuries, thousands of years went by when people were just getting married back and forth, getting married, and there was no connection to this redemptive purpose that God was working out.

And the apostle Paul tells us, he says, I am saying, I that this union between a man and a woman is about Christ and the church.

[42 : 56] R.C. Sproul, who is a dear theologian that we all love, who passed away a few years ago, reflecting on the first marriage of Adam and Eve, points to the ultimate marriage between Christ and the church.

And he observed that as it relates to sin, the first Adam said to God, don't blame me, blame my wife.

But the last Adam, Jesus Christ, hanging on the cross for sinners like you and me, said, don't blame my wife, blame me.

And God blamed him. God poured upon him the sins of sinners like you and me, whose place he was taking to make us his bride.

He was sacrificing himself to bring us to himself as a spotless bride in an expression of covenantal love, promising that he would always and only do us good, and he would never leave us, and he would never forsake us.

[44 : 20] And Paul says this human marriage is about that marriage. This human marriage is about the divine marriage.

And this is our goal in our marriage, husbands. our marriages are not ultimately about us and our wives. Our marriages are ultimately about Christ, to point to Christ and to the ultimate marriage.

When we are patient with our wives, and we forgive our wives, and we care for them in ways that are unnatural and uncommon, what we're doing is we're pointing a watching world to Christ and his covenantal union with his bride, the church.

We don't do that perfectly. We do that dimly. We do that feebly, but we do that nonetheless. And that is what our marriages ultimately are all about.

And what we're trying to do is we're trying to present before a watching world what this covenantal love looks like between Christ and his church.

[45 : 36] And when we do that, it will stand out above the other marriages that are not seeking to do that in any particular way.

And we can point them to this amazing Savior who sacrificed himself for his bride, the church, and who promised, I will never leave you.

I will never forsake you. And I will work in all things for your good, no matter what. It's amazing love.

in Revelation 19, 7 to 9, we read these words about the divine marriage, the one that our human marriages are supposed to point to.

Let us rejoice and exalt and give glory, and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and the bride has made herself ready. It was granted to her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

[46 : 56] And the angel said to me, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, these are the true words of God.

Brothers and sisters, on that glorious day, there will be no more need for marriage. There would be no more need for marriage because our human marriages would have fulfilled their temporary redemptive purpose, which is to be a signpost to the ultimate marriage.

And when that divine marriage happens, our human marriages fall away. And husbands on that day, we will cease to be husbands and we will be brides.

We will all be a part of the glorious bride of Christ, of people from all nations and all peoples and all languages and all ethnicities.

But until that day, husbands, we get to steward and care for members of Christ's bride in the persons of our wives. and husbands, this is a sober reminder to us that our brides are Christ's brides.

[48 : 22] Our brides are Christ's brides. We get to steward them. We get to hear for them and Christ is concerned how we treat them.

He is concerned that we do not abuse them, that we do not mistreat them, that we do not lord our authority over them. And if we do so, we do so to our own peril.

And so fellow husbands, until that day, may God give us the grace to love our wives, may Christ love the church, may he give us grace to steward them well.

Amen. Let's pray. Father, would you grant us grace to love our wives in self-giving and in self-sacrificing ways?

Would you help us, Lord, not to grow weary in doing well? Would you help us to meditate on the gospel and remember your great love for us in Jesus Christ?

[49 : 49] And God, enable us, by the power of your Holy Spirit, to love our wives in a similar way. Father, you know where each of us is as husbands, you know what we all need drawn air to us by the power of your Spirit and help us.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's sign for our closing song. Amen. Amen. Amen.