

Loving like Christ

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[0 : 00] How many of you have ever tried to drive in a straight line? You ever tried to do that? I don't want to have you admit these kind of things, but have you ever been trying to do things with both hands at the same time, and you've used your knee to drive?

How's that work? Since nobody wants to admit... The reason I actually bring that up is because whether you're riding a bicycle or you're driving a car, it really takes constant adjustment to stay on the road.

Would you agree with that? It just doesn't work out that you can kind of lock that steering wheel in one place and stay on track. You're going to end up in a mess.

And I bring that up because what I'm really interested in, in seeing changing and growing in my life, is how often I make those little micro-adjustments to my thinking using the Scriptures.

It's a little bit like driving. You've got to constantly make these little bumps and jogs so that you're tracking properly. So, by the same token, in our daily life and in the process of thinking and going through the details of life, we are constantly being bombarded by challenges.

[1 : 34] And the thing that I'm really interested in is knowing how quickly you respond using the Scripture as the counselor, as the governor, as the guide for where you go.

See, the longer the gap is between where you make that adjustment, the worse the trip is. Would you agree with me? And what I want to know is how are you doing at shortening the gap between that nasty, wicked, ungodly, self-centered, arrogant, stubborn, belligerent, unforgiving spirit that you struggle with from day to day and when the Scripture comes to rescue you from that kind of thinking?

Now, the reason I say that is because as we're singing, you have a perfect opportunity to kind of practice this thinking connected with Scripture.

What I mean by that is, as we're singing songs, what is it that the pastor keeps on asking you to do? What do I want you to do? I want you to cross-reference the songs that we sing with different passages of Scripture.

I can tell you John would not be the least bit put out. And I know, John, you like to see our people sing. I do too. I love it. But I don't think you'd be put out if you saw people as they're singing, stop and take their Bible and open it up and try.

[3 : 06] There's a passage that matches up. I want to know that one. The reason I bring this up is because I want you to grow at being a people whose thought life is corrected all the time by the Scriptures.

Now, at the end of the service, our deacons are going to get up early. And they're not leaving before I give the invitation just because they don't want to be in here during that time, or because it may not be suitable for them to be encouraged and challenged by it.

But we are going to be, remember we passed out flowers for all those women who are 18 years and older? We have a little gift for all of the men that are 18 years and older, and our deacons are going to be helping with that.

So, when they are slipping out quietly at the very end, I want you to understand that they're not leaving. They're going out into the hallway and they're going to be waiting for you there with a gift, all you who are men.

Turn your Bibles, if you would, to Ephesians chapter 5, and we're going to be looking at just a couple verses in this passage. Beginning there in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 25, it says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, 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.

[4 : 49] Let's pray. Our precious Father, this morning as we take this Word and we open it up, we are mindful that there is nothing that our human intellect and spirit can contribute to the Scriptures, that we are dependent upon Your Spirit both to inform our thinking and to mold and shape it.

And so we humble ourselves this morning to say that we need Your help, I need it, in the declaration of the truth, and all of Your people this morning need it in the comprehension and application of the truth.

And it is my prayer and has been my prayer that this Lord's Day and our study in the Scriptures would be one that has great significance to the men of our fellowship and to the ministry that we are in the Lord's Day and to the Lord's Day and to the ministry that they have as fathers, as husbands, as young men in their care for other individuals in their charge, or those that they influence, that the operating principle of the life that we carry forward from this day would be an example of the love of Christ.

And we ask that because our desire is to see the Lord Jesus glorified among us. And we ask it for His name. Amen.

Well, allow me to make several introductory remarks this morning as we look at this passage. And for one, I do want you to recognize this is a day that's set aside in our culture and in our church to give honor to those who are fathers, and more particularly to focus in on the importance of men being godly leaders in their homes and the places where they have influence.

[6 : 42] For another, our time in the Word this morning is going to be more focused on the practical application of the text. And the general model that we're going to be dealing with here is a model that we have already laid the foundation for in our previous studies in the book of Ephesians.

Now, you may wonder, am I preaching Ephesians 5.25 ahead of time? I can tell you no, because I will come back to it again, and I have complete confidence that what I preach today, there will be other things to say that are of value and benefit to you that as we study the Scriptures, we can open up and see more of what Christ has for us there.

But I want you to look at Ephesians 5.25-27 and recognize that our Scripture calls to men in particular to be those who love their wives.

And as I think about that subject, I want to recognize that I understand that not everybody here is a husband and a father. There are men here who are young, they're not married yet, there are young men who are not even men yet, and they're thinking that probably the thought has not crossed their mind, someday I get to be a dad.

But I want you to understand that the application of Scripture is universally beneficial, and in particular as it addresses the subject that we're going to be looking at today. And so what we find here in this passage is a reminder that we've been called to love because of Christ, and that is at the very heart of what our duty and obligation is.

[8 : 18] And we see here that the Spirit of God points out for us that Christ is the perfect model and example of genuine love. We look at the passage in Ephesians 5.25, it says, Husbands, love your wives.

Oh, how am I to love my wife? I am to love my wife the way Christ loves the church. That's the standard that is held up. And I want you to recognize that we all benefit from examples, don't we? We do much better when we can see it done and we know what it looks like than just having someone give us a little lecture about how to do it. We like, that's one of the things I like about YouTube.

Trying to figure out how to wire something electrically, you can give me a diagram, it's like brain dead. But watch it on a YouTube little clip, and I watch the guy do this, and I watch the guy do that, and slowly begins to come together and I can follow.

I need an example, and we all need examples. And so here we find that Christ is the one that's held up as the perfect example. And as we think about the love of Christ, and particularly his exemplarship in regards to that, I go back to that passage that we looked at earlier when we reminded ourselves in Ephesians 3, verse 14 through 19.

[9 : 31] Paul prays this, he says, Furthermore, I want us to recognize that when we think about the subject of love, particularly in the Scripture and here, we recognize that love is far more than a feeling.

If you go back in your own life and think about the various aspects of love that you've found to play out in your life, you'd have to admit that feelings are important, they're there.

But genuine sacrificial love takes a further step, and that's what we're going to be thinking about this morning, a further step. And what that sacrificial love does is that it meets the need of the beloved. And that's what we're going to be thinking about today as we look in this passage in Ephesians chapter 5. So we're going to break it down and we recognize that Christlike love is a commanded sacrifice.

That's what the Scripture tells us. It's given to us here in the imperative. It says, hey, listen, you have the obligation of loving your wife. It's your responsibility.

[10:38] And as we take up the text in verse 25, I think we mark the fact that loving is not an option for the husband or for the believer. The command is not just to have an emotional affection for your wife, but it is that you are to love her with a deep attachment and a genuine interest in that which is for her good.

For her good. And I want you to recognize that as you look at this passage, what we see in the text is that loving your wife is the highest calling that a Christian husband has next to his relationship with Christ.

I want you to think about that just for a moment. The highest calling that you have next to your relationship to Christ. Your wife is your first responsibility after your relationship with Christ.

And we know that from the Scriptures in many different contexts. One is Jesus said this. He says, what God has joined together, let what? Let no man pull apart. Your relationship with your wife is that which God has ordained to last for the entire life that He gives to you.

And that relationship is to be one that is boundaried or set by a genuine and sincere love that is recognizable. And so I want you to recognize that as you think about your responsibilities as a husband, or as someone who someday anticipates being a husband, understand this, that more important than you being the breadwinner, more important than you being the one who is the family protector, and the one who cares for some of the mechanical issues of the home, the most important thing is that you love your wife, and that is an undeniable responsibility that you have.

[12:25] Now, I want you to know that loving your wife is something you can grow in. And the evidence of your growth should be something that your wife bears witness to. Earlier this week, I had the nerve to ask my wife, how do you know I love you?

A little bit of a test for myself. If I'm going to preach on it, I ought to be practicing it in advance. And I said, okay, how do you know that I love you? Here's what she said. She said, honey, one of the ways I know that you love me is that you're willing to do almost anything I ask when I ask it.

And then there was a pause. And she said, except for moving furniture. Yeah, that's something I still have to work on.

I will tell you about that. I grew up in boarding school. My bed was screwed to the wall. It never moved. And I don't like change.

And my wife thinks change is a very, very good thing all the time. And there was a point in my life where I thought that my responsibilities was to help her to learn to be a little more content and leave things where they are.

[13:35] And I thought that probably one of the ways that she would get the memo is if when I moved something, I wrote on the back of the couch the date that it was last moved. Needless to say, I gave up on that.

And I realized that, okay, I still need to work at that. But when you think about this responsibility of loving your wife, it's something that your wife should be able to look at and say, I see how you've grown in that area.

Now, we may not really appreciate how radical Paul's statement was for his day. And yet, when we think realistically, we understand that this issue of genuine love for a wife is something that is atypical even in our contemporary culture.

But to kind of amplify and help you understand how serious and how significant this was in the ancient world, let me help you understand that in the city of Ephesus where Paul wrote, there was a temple to Diana that featured a thousand prostitutes that engaged in ritual prostitution for the sake of the advancement of religion.

And they were engaged in sexual immorality for the benefit of the temple. In addition to that, the Greek writer, Demosthenes, says this, and he gives us a little bit of an idea of what the ancient world's attitude was towards women.

[14:56] He explained it this way. He said, we keep mistresses for pleasure. We keep concubines for day-to-day needs. And we keep wives to produce children legitimately and so that our homes may be trustworthily guarded.

Okay? Three different categories that the ancient world had for women. There was the daily prostitute. There was the concubine. And there was the wife who was the legitimate bearer of the children for the family.

And you can understand when Paul comes into that kind of mindset and people who were saved in the church at Ephesus, they had grown up seeing that. Do you follow that? That was their mindset. And Paul says to them something that is absolutely startling. He says, husbands, love your wife. And it was like a shot out of the dark. What?

What? I have the same attitude towards my wife that my father had. I have the same attitude towards women that the rest of my culture has. And I want you to understand, beloved, sadly enough, in our contemporary culture, many, many men think more often in the same fashion that the world does than they think in the fashion of the Scriptures.

[16:15] And Paul says to men who are under the authority of the Word of God, he says, you are to love your wife. Christ commands you to love your wife.

And doing so is a choice and takes persistent effort. I want to say that again slowly so you understand it. Christ commands you to love your wife.

And doing so is a choice and takes persistent effort. You know, anybody that tells me that they love naturally is brain dead. And the reason I say that is that, well, let me rephrase that.

Anybody that says, well, I just love everybody, really. You know, love is of God is what the Scripture tells me. It's something that God works in me to make me inclined to love somebody else than Tim Kenoyer.

I'm natural at that, but everything else is a stretch. And genuine, lasting, growing love for a wife in the heart of a believing husband is something that is the work of the Spirit of God, and it's something that has to be nurtured.

[17:25] Let's notice three areas in which godly love is energized. Look at the passage, if you will, because it is the thing that instructs us.

It says here that Christ loves the church and gave Himself for it or for her. And then in verse 26 it says that He might sanctify her. Love works for growth.

As you read that in verse 26, you recognize that Christ's love proved itself in His effort to sanctify the bride. Sanctification is the process whereby a person grows spiritually.

And growth comes through the Spirit. It comes through an application of the Word of God. And it comes through the intentional focus of other individuals who are actively engaged in helping you become more of what you ought to be.

Let me say it a different way so you can connect with this. There are three active agents in progressive sanctification or the process of growing to be more like Christ. Number one, the Word of God.

[18:28] Number two, the Spirit of God. Number three, godly people who take the Word of God, rely on the Spirit of God, and help you grow in grace. Do we grow in grace accidentally?

What's the answer? No. Now, there are active agents involved, and we need the help of other people in particular. In this passage, we see that the husband is responsible for helping his wife grow spiritually.

The husband is responsible. Say that again. He is God's appointed human instrument for growth. And please don't miss the fact that this is the first practical expectation that we have here in the list of things that godly husband is to do.

One of the things that I've always enjoyed over the years is being involved in premarital counseling. And I always enjoy having that young couple come in, and they come in with all this enthusiasm and this expectation.

They're kind of giddy with the thought of being married, and they're all enthused about what marriage is going to be, and they've kind of fantasized. And I'm not there to discourage them. I mean, marriage is a wonderful thing, but it's a little challenging because, unfortunately, marriage puts two sinners in the same canoe.

[19:40] And as I get involved, one of the things that I always ask the young man, so are you thinking about how you can help this young lady grow spiritually?

Really? I've got to tell you, I am not sure if I've had maybe more than one or two young men say, yes, I have.

You see, what's usually going on in a young man's mind as he's thinking about marriage is he's thinking, what do I get out of this? Surprisingly enough, young women have the same thoughts. And when that selfishness comes together, it has this little, what would you call it, the Teutonic plates kind of clash a little bit and settle in and have to work some things through.

Scripture makes it clear that a godly husband is responsible for his wife's spiritual progress. And God intends for the believing husband to be actively engaged in helping his wife grow in grace. And there are several things that go with that that I want you to recognize. Number one, it takes being a lifelong student yourself. If you're going to be effective in helping your wife grow spiritually, and let me tell you, young men, that as a general rule, and it may be a surprise to you, but most of the young girls that I know are probably ahead of where the average young man is spiritually.

[21 : 05] I don't know exactly why that is. It's probably because they practice nesting skills and they realize that spirituality is important for the survival of the species or something like that. But they do pay attention more often to spiritual things.

And so the poor guy arrives on the scene and, oh, I'm supposed to be the spiritual leader. What does that mean? And if you're going to grow to be the spiritual leader, you've got to be a conscious and diligent student yourself.

And mark what it says here. In verse 26, it says, Having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the Word. The thing that is used to help her with her progressive sanctification is the Word of God.

And I've got to tell you, you can't teach what you don't know. You can't reference what you are not familiar with. You cannot use the instrument of the Word of God and rely upon the Spirit of God if you are not engaged in growing yourself.

It just won't happen. What you will rely upon is your own thinking and your own preferences and your own selfishness will get in the way of providing genuine, genuine spiritual counsel and improvement.

[22 : 15] A man who wants to bless his wife will be one who grows in the Word and then helps her grow by extension. Second thing, if you want to be effective in helping your wife in the area of sanctification, is being sensitive to what the spiritual needs are that your wife has.

Yes. I remember reading a book by Lou Priolo called The Perfect Husband. No, The Excellent Husband. Yes. The Excellent Husband by Lou Priolo.

Not a bad book to get. Wives, you could buy that and Amazon it to his Kindle or whatever else and have him read it next week. It would help him tremendously. But in that book, it talks about, in fact, it has a little checklist of questions the husband can ask himself to see how he's doing.

Do you remember that, Pastor Saul? Reading through that and, oops, I've got to work at that. Oops, I've got to work at that. Greg, where are you, Bernard? Remember reading that book? And it's not a bad idea.

Read the book and ask your wife, how am I doing at this? How am I doing at that? And recognize if you are going to be effective in ministering to your wife, you've got to become a better student of who she is and where things are in her life.

[23 : 26] Third, I want to tell you, if you're going to help her grow, you need to be intentional in ministering to the areas in her life that are evident. Now, listen to me carefully.

Remember I said marriage puts two sinners in a canoe, right? Do you understand that? God has ordained that husbands be actively engaged in helping their wives grow spiritually.

And helping your wife grow spiritually means you've got to know the Word, you've got to know what her needs are, and then you have to plan to how you're going to help her grow through these things. Sadly enough, over the years of ministry, one of the things that I have been deeply grieved by is watching men who in their passivity, and what do we mean by passivity?

They see the train wreck coming, and they just kind of sit there, and they're unwilling to do anything other than when they're irate, and they're irritated, and they really don't respond with a biblical game plan to help their wife work through some of the challenges in her life.

God calls a husband to recognize what's going on and then begin honestly and humbly dealing with those things to bring about progressive sanctification. If you knew that your wife was struggling with a serious vitamin deficiency, what would you do as a husband?

[24 : 56] You'd go get some multivitamins, right? And you'd try a little bit of gentle encouragement. You'd probably just set the jar somewhere on the counter, right?

And say, honey, I know you have this deficiency. Why don't you take one of these a day? And if that didn't work, what would you do? Hello? Hello? If you really loved her, well, it's up to her.

You know, hey. You're going to be pushing her on in a wheelchair. You better get the vitamins in her. And so I want to encourage you, if you're going to be the husband that God calls you to be, you need to step up and plan, how do I help her grow?

What are the things that she needs? And then actively engage in using the Word of God and the testimony, example of your life to move her in the direction she needs to go in. Let me say that again slowly.

Your wife should think of you as the key contributor to your spiritual development. One of the interesting things that it says in the book of 1 Timothy, and I'm just off the cuff here.

[26 : 04] Remember where it says that church is not a place where there's supposed to be a lot of superfluous conversation from women. It says if a woman has a question, what should she do? What should she do?

She should go ask her family theologian. Who is that? The husband. The supposition is that he is the one who is versed in the Scriptures. I'm glad you asked that question.

I probably need to do a little bit of study, but I'll get back with an answer. Your wife needs your help, and God hired you to do the job.

Second, love works for glory. Look at that passage in Ephesians chapter 5 and mark what it says there in verse 26, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor.

It says that Christ is working in us so that he might present the church to himself in splendor. And the idea there is that he is actively engaged in adorning the bride so that her traits and her beauty are stunning.

[27 : 07] Something attractive. Something appealing. And recognize that the godly husband and every godly man should be interested in the spiritual traits and the spiritual beauty of those that they lead.

So what are some of the things that adorn the life of the godly woman and make them stand out in our world? For one, I think about the passage in Proverbs 31 verse 30 where it says this.

It says that a right view of God is something that is attractive and creates a splendor or a beauty associated with it. It says that the woman who fears the Lord, what?

She'll be praised. Man, that woman is the one who is recognized for her character and her strength and her beauty and the one who is genuinely attractive.

Another thing that I'm reminded of, and I want you to turn to the passage, is over in 1 Peter chapter 3, 1, or chapter 3. 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 4. Turn there if you would, please.

[28 : 08] 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 4. It says, But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. Now what is neat about imperishable is it doesn't fade.

What is not neat about physical beauty is that it's gone soon. How many of you remember that? If you're somewhere in the upper tier of life, you probably find yourself occasionally looking at yourself in the mirror and thinking, What happened?

Peter references that. He says, Hey. He says, Let your adorning. That means the way in which you decorate yourself. You know?

Let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

And so the husband's responsibility is seeing to it that in his wife he is building the characteristics that bring out lasting beauty and are respected over time.

[29 : 23] I think to myself of some of the dear ladies in our ministry who in their older years are just so actively engaged in serving other people.

And I know that at a heart's moment or a heartbeats moment, they are ready to invest in the lives of others and they're active in prayer and encouragement. Man, those are the women whose beauty far outshines what they were as a young lady.

I recognize also that a sincere love for others is something that is genuinely beautiful.

Christ was the one that said that the thing that should be a giveaway or a tell about us is that we have a genuine love for the brethren. And so as you think about what am I to do as a husband to

bring about this splendor and beauty in my wife, I am to encourage her character development and in the area of ministry and joy that becomes valuable to the bride of Christ.

Third, mark what it says there in the passage, going back, if you will, to Ephesians. It says that love works for godliness. Ephesians chapter 5 verse 27, it says that she might be holy and without blemish.

[30 : 40] Christ's effort in sanctification and His effort in presenting the church to Himself in splendor is all about holiness. Holiness is not a small thing to Christ and it cannot be a small thing in our thinking.

For one, we are reminded over in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 4 that He saved us for holiness. And we have to recognize also that He is actively engaged in work whereby we may be partakers of His holiness.

I love what it says in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 10. It says, this is the reason that He is actively engaged in disciplining you. Why? That you may be a partaker in His holiness.

He is in the business of helping you grow to be more like Christ and holy in that process. And when a husband loves like Christ, or where a godly man serves like Christ, his interest is in seeing the ones he loves growing in godliness.

Now, Father's Day is a day in which we focus in broad terms upon those men who are fathers and husbands. But I want to expand this just a little bit and have you think with me of the fact that it can be universally applied, particularly to those who are men, and in a broader sense to all of us.

[32 : 00] Are husbands the only ones that are charged with the responsibility of loving somebody other in a sacrificial, sacrificial, sanctifying, encouraging, improving movement towards holiness fashion?

And the answer is, not at all. Every believer is to be actively engaged in encouraging the progressive sanctification of others. Would you agree with that? That's what you'd be doing. You should be interested in seeing that the other person improves, that the characteristic of their life is something that other people recognize as noteworthy, noteworthy, and partly because you have been engaged in nurturing and stimulating their growth in Christ.

And third, that as a result of your love and interest in that person, that other people can see their progress in holiness, in godliness, in sincere affection for the things of eternity.

And so, let me ask you a question as you look at this passage, and the purpose of preaching is not just, hey, well, here are the facts. Take them if you want. The purpose of preaching is to bring you to a point of saying yes or no to God.

[33 : 10] God wants you, men, women, all of us here this morning to ask ourselves the question, am I loving like Christ wants me to love? And as a result of my love, are those people that I minister to growing in grace?

And if that's not the answer that you can give honestly and humbly this morning, let me say, first of all, that you need to fix your eyes on the cross. And remind yourself of the love that Christ has lavished on you.

Pray that you would be more affected in the days to come with the love that Christ has for you. In fact, it is the last thing that Tim Knoyer now says to himself every single night.

I remind myself of the unbelievable love of Christ for me. I don't remember exactly where the Spirit of God began to convict me that I was a lousy lover.

It was a long time ago. But when the Spirit of God convicted me of that, I began to pray that he would change me. Today, when I pray for you as a fellowship, I don't know if you know this, but in my, where I keep the prayer list, you're divided into ten rows because there's ten watchcare deacons, right?

[34 : 44] One day, one day, one day. And I can tell you now, when I pray for you, I pray for you with a greater love than I ever had. It also means that I hurt more when you don't walk with Christ.

I want the rest of you to grow in your love for Christ, that it will end up affecting your love for other people. Second, be honest with yourself.

You know, ask yourself if your relationships with others are marked by the kind of love that Christ showed. Is that a fair question? When other people think about you, do they think, man, he loves me like Jesus does?

Or do they find you pretty full of yourself and your own agenda and your own interests? Third, commit. Commit.

Lord, I need to change. And I am going to ask that you help me change in understanding the depth of your love for me and then playing it forward in the lives of other people.

[35 : 57] Finally, pray that he would help you grow in loving others. Can I tell you something about loving others? There are some that are just naturally easy to love.

Do you understand that? I mean, it's the people that like the same kind of things you do and talk the same kind of talk. Do you follow those? Yeah, man, we're friends, you know.

But God also brings others into your life that will stretch your love quotient. It's the way it is. And you begin praying, Lord, help me love the way you love and to do so in the power of the Spirit of God that I might honor the one who loves me like he does.

Let's close in prayer. Father God, this morning you know our hearts. You know the desperate need we have to have our lives molded and shaped by the power of the Word of God and to grow in grace.

Thank you for the truth in Scripture and for the fact that it is not dependent upon a man's words to have its way in our heart. Let the Spirit anchor these truths in our lives, bring conviction where it is needed, encouragement where it is needed, conversion where it is needed, that this morning we might see Christ exalted in our midst.

[37 : 18] And we ask this in your precious name. Amen.