

# A Husband's Duty of Sacrificial Love

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Date: 26 January 2014

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[0:00] There are two other men that also serve as deacons, Bill Krull, who is our Sunday School Superintendent, and I believe he is in one of the children's ministries involved, and Tim Smith, he is responsible for the ushers and the greeters, and he is at a retreat this Sunday.

I want you to turn in your Bibles this morning to Ephesians chapter 5 verse 25, and as I begin, I want you to join me asking the Spirit of God to help us as we study this passage together. After I read it, we will pray. Ephesians chapter 5 verse 25, I encourage you to follow along in your own copy of the Scriptures and pay attention to the passage that we are going to study with the help of the Spirit.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Let's pray. Father God, this morning as we take your Word, we take it with a reverence and a thankfulness because we recognize that it is the perfect expression of your character, your wisdom, your love, and that the fact that you have given us instruction indicates that we need that.

[1:28] We confess as well that our nature tends to not want to listen, and we are thankful that, first of all, salvation has opened our heart to the desperate need of our soul and salvation and also made us receptors of your truth and willing to hear.

We're thankful also for the ministry of the Spirit of God that imbides every believer that we can rely upon this morning to take your Word and quicken it to our heart that having heard, we might be molded and shaped to be more like Christ.

I think, Father, also this morning of those that are here that need Christ. And I recognize, Lord, that as we study this passage that is directed primarily to believers, I'm confident that your Spirit can work in a larger frame, and we pray that those who do not know Christ will be drawn to the cross. We also think, Lord, of the fact that the purpose of preaching is not just to inform us, but really to transform us through the power of the Word and through the Spirit. And so I pray, Lord, that the men who are here today as husbands would be both humbled and encouraged, and that the effect of the preaching of the Word of God would be one that is recognized by those in our fellowship that are wives, by children, by unbelievers and neighbors, that they would recognize that our men are different.

And that that difference would not be, by any stretch, a matter of arrogance, but one of profound humility. Because every one of us who are men and husbands know our own frailty and our desperate need for you.

[3:29] And so we want to thank you in advance for what you are going to do through the work of your Word, the power of your Spirit, and the prayers of your people.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I've broken the passage that we're going to study down into three simple statements, and having said that, I'm not going to say that the passage is simple, but I do want to keep it at the outset, something clear and concise that you can follow with me. And so we're going to begin, first of all, looking at what Christ has done. And I want you to track with me, if you will, for a moment, that Christ has blessed His children incredibly.

And when you take a passage such as this, in Ephesians 5, verse 25, that makes this pointed statement, husbands love your wives, that statement should not be separated from the larger context of what we've already learned in the book of Ephesians.

And remember, when the letter to the church at Ephesus arrived, it was read in one sitting. Now, you may ask, why don't I just read it and let you go home?

[4:43] One of the things that we know from the Bible is that the Scriptures are there also for the sake of exposition. And what that means is that here is the text, and we want to understand what the text itself says.

But then we also want to understand how the text applies in our lives today. And so we have chosen to break the things down a little more carefully. And yet, as we begin, I do want you to mark the broader picture of what Christ has done for us.

And so think with me just for a moment back to Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3. If I were to think of several of the passages that you should be encouraged to memorize, Ephesians 1, verse 3 would be one of those that I would want stuck front and center in your thinking.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. There are times in all of our lives, perhaps, I can't speak for everyone, but I would say for most of us, there are times where our life is pretty blue and disconsolate, and there are difficulties.

Ecclesiastes comments on the fact that as sparks flow up, so are troubles to a man. And all of us have had moments in our life where things are complicated and difficult. But when the apostle writes to the church at Ephesus, he says, Hey, listen, I want you to understand that you have been blessed to completion in Christ Jesus.

[6:15] You are rich beyond imagination. So we want to start, as we look at what will be a command, first of all to remind ourselves, hey, God has done incredible things in our lives. He's good.

Secondly, I do want you to understand that Christ has enabled us for godly living through His Spirit. And I think this is a very important point for us to note.

In fact, as we are looking at Ephesians chapter 5, verse 25, where we find a very pointed command to husbands to love their wives, it is actually set against the background of being a Spirit-filled believer, and this part is a command directly to those who are husbands.

And so when you sit here this morning as a husband and you hear the teaching of the Word of God, I would challenge you to not ever think that you can accomplish the expectation of Christ apart from the power of the Spirit of God.

To go about doing the things that God calls you to do without having a humble dependence upon the Spirit of God is either profound ignorance or profound arrogance, and neither of the eyes are good.

[7:37] I do want you to understand that we, every one of us that know Christ, desperately need His work in our lives every moment of the day.

And so as you hear His command, as we are going to find here just in a moment, keep in mind that for the believer, it's given to us with the expectation that we're going to rely upon the Spirit of God to accomplish it.

So if you're sitting here this morning as a husband, a believing husband, here is one of the logical outcomes that should go through your mind at the end of the service or at various points in the journey.

For one, the power of the preaching of the Word of God ought to lead you to profound thankfulness that you're saved and that you have received the instruction of God Himself in what it means to live a life that is pleasing to the Creator of the universe and that person who is infinitely wise and good. And He's given you instruction. Secondly, it should lead you to a profound humility and dependence on the Spirit of God.

[8:58] Because as you hear what God asks or expects for you as a Christian husband, it ought to leave you a little bit like the Apostle when he considered the responsibility of preaching the Gospel.

He said, Who is sufficient for such things? And so as we listen to the responsibilities that God has laid upon those who are husbands in particular this morning, there should be that, Wow, what a blessing that God has given me instruction.

But on the other hand, there should also be, Wow, man, how do I do this? I need God's help and I'm thankful for the Spirit. Having said that as a background, I want us to look at what Christ commands.

I read the passage to you, but I want you to look at it again. It's profoundly pointed, simple, short. Husbands, love your wives. I'm not sure how much weight we ought to actually put on the Greek grammar at this point.

And when I say that, please allow me to finish the sentence so that you don't prejudice what I'm going to say in remainder. My point is this, is that actually in the Greek, the wife is not commanded specifically to submit to her husband.

[10:16] It's there by implication, and it is correct because in the first part of verse 21 where we says, Submitting to one another, it goes on and says, And wives. It just falls along.

But the man himself receives an explicit and direct command from God, Here is what you are to do. Now I want you to understand this morning that the command to love your wife is incredibly challenging.

This command is not about having warm feelings for her. It's not about having warm sexual passion for her or really, really liking to have her around.

Let me point out several misunderstandings that our culture foists off on us. And I want you to think with me just for a moment to a passage in Jeremiah chapter 17, 9, where it says this, The heart, does anybody remember the remainder of it?

How many of you know Jeremiah 17, 9? Raise your hands and wave at me. Get them up high. Elbow above the ear. Okay. Those who did not raise their hands, learn this.

[11:30] Jeremiah chapter 17, 9, The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Do you know what it's saying? Your heart is this perverse little engine that spends a lot of its energy fooling you.

And not only are we fooled by our own heart, but we are fooled by the world that we are in. And so when we think about what it says here, that we are to love our wives, I want you to understand that it's pretty easy to gloss over this and think, Well, yeah, I'm doing that.

But the idea that the world has is that love is either incredibly sappy or it's incredibly self-serving or it's incredibly sexual.

I like The Princess Bride. It's a great movie. It's a cult favorite. My family has watched it so many times that many of our family members can recite little clips, you know, like never start a land war in Asia or whatever.

You know, there are many little things that... And I have, for extra credit, I have watched things like Return to Me, Sleepless in Seattle, and While You Were Sleeping.

[12:47] You know, I've done all those. In fact, I've done them more than once. But I want you to understand that Hollywood's picture of what love is like, of kind of coming along serendipitously and catching a person at the spur of the moment and filling them with all these warm fuzzies and then having them drift off into the sunset where everything works perfectly, that's not what real marriage and love is like.

I want you to recognize others view love as more of what you get or at least trade out in kind of a proportionate relationship with someone else.

I can't tell you how many times I've had individuals in my office where I ask them, so what's their perception of marriage? And the more enlightened individuals will let me know that, well, marriage is kind of a trading situation where, you know, it's 50-50.

And when they say that to me, it's like, duh, 1 plus 1 equals 2, right? I mean, 50-50 is the golden rule of marriage. I've had people tell me when I've said, so why did you divorce her or why did you divorce him?

Well, they weren't keeping up. I've had them tell me this. They weren't keeping up their part of the bargain. You know, the idea that love is kind of this partnering business and, you know, you ought to be getting something out of it if you're going to be putting in.

[14:14] And believe me, there are more people that think that way than you would care to recognize. In fact, I would venture to say, while we'd not raise our hands on this one, there's not a one of us in here that at one point or another in our thinking has not been a little frustrated with the fact that our return has not matched the investment.

Do you follow what I'm saying? We've been putting a whole lot into it, and it ain't paying out like we'd like. And now, we don't say that up front to our wife.

We have enough intelligence. But inside, there's that little frustration of, you know, I brought her flowers, and what do I get for that? Or, you know, hey, I go off to work, and I put in 50, 60 hours, and what do I get in return?

Now, there are other men who've looked me in the eye and tried to explain that while they really love their wife, they just can't help loving other women too.

Do you follow that? It's no big deal. I really do. I've had them look at me face to face and say, I really do love my wife.

[15:34] And she ought to know it. But she shouldn't be surprised that I love someone else as well. I mean, you know, so many people, so little time.

And so, the attitude is, it's all right. And don't think. That kind of thinking is only restricted to those who are crass, broken pagans.

The husband is to love his wife because Christ loves him.

And I think that it is very important for us to get that grasp in our minds. Christ loves me. You know, if I were to zero in on the most important thing for a believer, well, that's a pretty mouthful, so I'll guard it a little bit.

But one of the most important things, how's that? One of the most important things for the believer to be persuaded of and to grow in appreciating is the abounding love of Christ. We sang a song that talked about how wide, how deep is his love.

[16:56] Question. How many of you sitting out there as you were singing, and we were doing well this morning singing, but as you were singing, how many of you had scriptures going through your mind about that song?

Raise your hands. Above the ear. I'm looking above the ear. Okay. Stop. Listen.

You ought to do that. You ought to do that. Here's why. Something that is noble, or let me start at the beginning and work forward.

Every thought should be framed against scriptures. We all would say, what, what? Yes, yes. Right? Yes. Of course. Unto the law and the testimonies, that they speak not according to this, because there's no light in them.

Isaiah chapter 8, verse 20. The scriptures are the premise on which we judge all things. And so as we're singing, first of all, we want to be sure that what we're singing matches up with what God has said.

[18:05] By the way, what God has said is 100% accurate, 100% profitable, and it's just unbelievably blessed. Correct? Agreed? Every Christian, nod their head. Go ahead, just entertain me.

Yep. Nod their head. Yeah, we're good. Some of you just said, I'm not. Pastor wants my head nod. You can come back here and help me. Stop. Okay. Here's the deal. We accept the fact that God has said good things.

So when you're singing, you ought to be thinking, well, does God think that really? And then after you say, well, yeah, I'd like to know what God thinks. Here's the benefit of tracking and putting scripture along with what you're singing.

Follow. Follow. The Spirit of God is not obligated to take your warm, fuzzy thinking and do a whole lot with it. But He is obligated to take the scripture and drive it home and have it make a difference in your life.

And all of God's people said, I got that one. So, in the future, what are we always doing? We're working. We're working. We're working. We're hoping to grow to be a people who think according to the scriptures.

[19:13] I come back to say, it is so important for the believer to be persuaded of the abounding love of Christ for us.

And here in this passage, it says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

The word that Paul chose to use here is one that is very interesting in the Greek. And the Greek actually was very...it was a very clear and explicit language that made distinctions.

There was love that was largely sexual and passionate. There was love that was the familial kind of love. There was love that was kind of brotherly companionship.

And, you know, that's where we get the name Philadelphia, right? The most loving city in America gets its name from Phila Delphos, you know, city of love, brotherly love.

[20:31] And so, the Greek made some distinctions. And the one that Paul uses here is the word agape. And I don't want to overplay it at this point. But it is a word that talks about a kind of love that is deliberate and unconditional.

It's an act of the will that seeks the best for the beloved. It's deliberate and unconditional. And it's an act of the will that seeks the best for the beloved.

So, when somebody walks into me and says, Hey, and I've had this happen, I just don't love her anymore. My response to that is, Oh, well, that's not a problem because Jesus can fix your attitude. And I don't mean that in a crass way. But, hey, every one of us in here have not loved for a couple minutes or days. Do you agree? Huh? I mean, thankfully, we've not said it as often as we thought it. But it's been there. It's been there. Paul uses this little phrase. He says, Husbands, love your wives agape like Christ loves the church.

[21:47] Do you know how easy it is to deceive yourself on how you're doing at loving? Huh? Do you really know? It's easy.

In fact, if I were to ask all of you, and I'm not going to. I'm not going to say, So, how many think you're really doing well? Nobody here. No, it's me. But as you walk out the door, most of you are thinking, I'm doing okay.

I mean, you know, I'm not as bad as Bubba. You know what I mean? I know guys that are a lot worse than I am. I've got to tell you something. I debated about this. But here's the truth. There was a time in my life where I really didn't love my wife.

I was in seminary. What should a seminarian be studying? Oh, how to handle the Word. And I remember I was a senior in seminary, and I had another seminarian in my home, and we were talking about, Well, eventually we're going to graduate.

And then we're going to have to get a job in a church. And I was thinking, And here's what I was thinking. As I was listening to that young man, he was just all fired up about, I'm going to get out there. And I was thinking, I don't like people.

[23:00] That's what I thought. That's what I thought. Oh, I tell you, someone asked me, So what's changed about you in the last 35 years of whatever ministry?

I said, Well, for one thing, I've grown to love people. But it wasn't the bad thing, the worst thing. I remember sitting there and thinking to myself, I don't love my wife. How can a man be a shepherd of the congregation, the bride of Christ, if he doesn't love his wife?

I had to learn the hard way how to do that. I sat on the other side of a counseling table. I had Bill Good say to me, Tim, you don't love your wife. And truth of the matter is, I was thinking, What are you low life?

I haven't shot her. I mean, you know, I'm just telling you what I thought. Despicable me. Not the movie, but the person. God put me on a two-year remedy.

Listen to me. Husbands, love your wives. As Christ loved the church. So what does it mean for a husband to love his wife like Christ?

[24:28] Well, it would be fitting for the lesson, being that it is in Ephesians, to rely to a large degree upon the context of the book. Does that make sense? So are there many, many different passages where I could take you and help you see how Christ loves the church from other books?

I could, but we're going to try to stay within Ephesians for the most part. And I want you to understand that, first of all, the kind of love that Christ has for the church and the kind of love that a husband is to have for his wife is love that is ambitious for the future good.

Love that is ambitious for the future good. You look at Ephesians chapter 1 verse 4 just for a moment. I just touch on it in passing.

It says, Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love. By the way, who was he thinking about when he decided on you? He was thinking about some scumbag that really wasn't worth a passing thought. And before you ever were created, he decided that he would love you and he would draw you out of your rebellious state and he would bring you to himself and wrap you in his loving arms and he would care for you

by purchasing your redemption with his own blood.

[26:06] Amen. So, a godly husband is ambitious for his wife's future good.

Now, I'll tell you what, Lord willing, and we don't have snow and I'm around, I hope to preach on that a little more next week. There's a lot there. But, future good. Secondly, love that is unconditional. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 5. Love that is unconditional. It says there in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 5, it says, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together in Christ, by grace you've been saved.

Now, dead doesn't tell all the story. It is part of the picture. One of the things that God did over and over again in the Old Testament with the nation of Israel is he reminded them where they came from.

And, and as he was giving them his expectations, he kept on framing those expectations against the backdrop of his unconditional love and his interest in them.

[27:23] Let's just try this, the Ten Commandments. He starts out by saying, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, land of slavery.

Elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah, I believe it is, or Isaiah, he says, listen, I found you as a, as an outcast. I found you lying in your blood.

One of the things that happened in the ancient world is when you had a baby and you didn't want a baby, what you did was you just abandoned the baby on the side of the road and the baby died of exposure. Very common.

Very common. And he says, I came along and I saw you there lying in your blood. Your mother had walked away from you, left you there. I picked you up. I bathed you.

I took care of you. I clothed you. The love of God for us is unconditional. And so a godly husband loves his wife and lets her know that she is beautiful and beloved when she has morning breath, when she has bed head, when she doesn't have her paint on.

[28:42] Some of you little girls are wondering, what's that all about? Well, you'll understand. Don't look at me yet. What? You're the only one I'm allowed to look at and keep looking at.

Do you follow that? What? No, is it? That's it? One, one person. By the way, she's sitting right over there. I know where she is. A godly husband loves his wife with her weaknesses and her repeated frailties.

And he lets her know that his love for her only grows stronger by the day. Christ's love for us is also fully relational.

Look at Ephesians 2, verse 6, and then verse 13. It says this. It says there in Ephesians 2, verse 6, it says, and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. A couple weeks ago, our kids went to the winter jam. And that was just an incredibly cold day. I was obsessing about whether my grandchildren were going to survive.

[30:04] Do you have hand warmers? Are you wearing wool socks? Do you have, you know, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm going to be good. You know, and it's like, so after it's all over, they had to go, oh, skinny jeans are not for cold weather.

You know, yes, I understand. You know, and it wasn't just my grandchildren. I know there were a bunch of them out there that were testing the elements.

How's that? You want to look like a Michelin man? There's a reason for it. Okay. Well, back we go. We're staying with the text. That's what we're working on. There in verse 6, it says, he seated us with him in the heavenly places. You know what it's saying? It says, he called us, come on inside. Let me put my arms around you and love you.

We were outside. He brought us inside. He loved us. Then in verse 11, here's what it says, therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what was called the circumcision, which is in the flesh by hands.

[31:05] It says, we were alienated. And then in verse 13, it says here, and we who were once far off have been brought nigh.

Do you understand that? You were out and now you're in. There's a relationship there that the apostle is referencing that's important for us to recognize.

And so, let me tell you, to love your wife like Christ loved the church means that you're willing to spend time listening to your wife's interests. You should know when she's happy or when she's sad. You should know what she's concerned about or what's on her mind. You should know what her favorite restaurant is and what food she likes. And by the way, let me tell you something, there's no substitute for actually being a good listener.

And I can tell you this from experience, it takes lots of time. be interested in the things that are important to her.

[32:12] I've got to tell this. Sorry Carrie's here, but I'll tell it anyway. I've been tracking on Facebook. Yeah, pastor goes on Facebook. Some of you ought to watch what you post. But anyway, I've been tracking on Facebook where there's one young couple in our church and I'm watching this guy go in and look at dishes.

You know, I mean, why does the bride-to-be have to take pictures of all these things? I don't know. But she does and she posts them and so here's the young man, you know, yeah, yeah, those towels will really go good with the paint in our bathroom.

You know, I've got to tell you guys, hey, you're just warming up for the main event. You're not even halfway home. I want you to recognize another thing about this love.

It's sacrificial. There in the passage in Ephesians, it says that, look at the passage because it is so profound. As Christ loved, that's past tense.

Do you understand that? Past tense. He loved the church and gave himself up for her. when you love your wife, it means that when you don't get your way, you don't pout and let her know about it.

[33:39] Everybody look up, men in particular, that smile at me, say, I know you're talking to me because I am. when you don't get your way.

You know, some of us are kind of surly boors. And so, yeah, we didn't get our way, but buddy, there's payback. That means, and here I'm telling to myself, and it's hard, but it means moving furniture just because.

You know, I've got to confess this. There was a time where I thought that I really needed to change my wife and God thought she needed to change me.

But I thought that it would be a good idea if what I did was I took out a magic marker and on the bottom of the couch every time I moved it, I put a date. I don't do that anymore.

But there is an advantage. I'm getting older and one of the things that goes with getting older is I, guess what? I have grandkids. Woo-hoo-hoo! And I have a son-in-law that is just a worker man.

[34:46] Yes, sir. So Judith now said, honey, would you ask? Okay. But things we've got to work on. We're in the process of remodeling again.

Yeah, I know, don't laugh, but we're kind of preparing, so if my parents move in with us, we're able to take care of them. And I've moved the toilet in where we're going to have our bedroom three times.

Now, understand that it hasn't been plumbed yet, but the reason it hasn't been plumbed is because I knew what was going to happen. Do you follow that? I want it here.

Yes, ma'am. And a couple days later, I want it here. Okay. I want it here. You know, our toilet is in a circular kind of, we're not talking about the bowl, we're talking about the toilet itself is just moving around and it's a, okay, hey, it's sacrificial.

That means that you as a godly husband are willing to get down your knees and wash your feet like Jesus did. Sitting around like some little North Korean dictator, you know, Kim Il-jong, you know, and stomping your feet and expecting her to grab you a glass of ice water while she does everything else, it's just not the Bible picture.

[36:21] So what goes through the mind of a Christian husband this morning as they sit here and listen to the teaching of the Word of God and the preaching of the Word of God? One of the things that ought to be happening is that you sit here and think, oh, Lord, help me.

Right? Is that logical? I'm not up to that. Well, who is? But you know what it ought to do?

It ought to drive the Christian husband to prayer. It ought to drive the Christian husband with humility to recognize his desperate need for the Spirit of God and it ought to make a difference in your home.

I have no doubt that there are some here today that do not know Christ. And I would confess at the outset that preaching about Christian husbands loving your wife like Christ loved the church is so far off the screen that it's hardly anywhere in the room.

But here's what is always in the room. As you consider the difference between Christ and his love for the church and the natural heart of the unsaved man or woman who's here today, there has to be a sense of shame and guilt for the sinfulness of the heart of every man and woman.

[37:53] Do you follow that? And the gospel is sweet. Do you know what the gospel is? It says that you are a sinner condemned before a holy God and you cannot save yourself or change your way.

But God knowing the desperate condition of your heart sent Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world and he died in your place.

And the Bible offers as a free gift it says so that whosoever believes on him should have everlasting life. So Christian women who are sitting here may be thinking to themselves I really wish my husband loved me that way.

That's fair. But here's your deal you just work on your part let God work on his part do you follow that? There are Christian husbands who are thinking I'm not there. Good.

I'm glad you got that message because the purpose of the preaching of the word of God is putting us on the spot of saying hey I got to work at this how do I do it? I rely upon the word and I rely upon the spirit and I rely upon God's people to help me.

[39:20] To walk out of here indifferent to the authority of the word of God is to kind of invite him to get your attention another way.

Make sense? So let's close in prayer and ask God to help you deal with the teaching of his word in practical personal way.

Our Father God this morning your word is clear it's called to us as Christian men and husbands in particular is profoundly humbling that we who are frail as we are should be examples of Christ.

And so like the Apostle Paul we say who is sufficient for these things and then we recognize with the very same breath our sufficiency is from God. Convict us of your expectation.

Convict us of our need. and encourage us to be faithful in our divine duty. We ask this in your precious name.

[40:32] Amen.