

# The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

## God's Design for Marriage, Part II

### Ephesians 5:25-29

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***Ephesians 5:25-33** Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; **26** That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, **27** That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. **28** So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. **29** For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

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#### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

When the Apostle Paul was writing to Timothy, he declared that Timothy should not have a “spirit of fear.” Then he defined three areas in Timothy’s life that he should have; a spirit of power, love and a mind that is well balanced and under the right influences.

***2 Timothy 1:7** For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

Therefore, we can assume that the Christian should understand the doctrines of the Gospel and have power and love. It is interesting that power and love seem to have the same weight. Power, in the Christian life, is always to be exercised in love.

I read about a young man who was determined to win the affection of a lady who refused to even talk to him anymore. He decided that the way to her heart was through the mail, so he began writing her love letters. He wrote a love letter every day to this lady. Six, seven times a week she got a love letter from him. When she didn't respond, he increased his output to three notes every twenty-four hours. In all, he wrote her more than seven hundred letters. She finally wound up marrying the postman.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Guzik, Pastor of Calvary Chapel in Santa Barbara, CA. <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/4905.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1998) 354

Winston Churchill once attended a formal banquet. “If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be?” Naturally everyone was curious as to what Churchill, seated next to his beloved Clemmie, would say. When it finally came Churchill’s turn, the old man, who was the dinner’s last respondent to the question, rose and gave his answer. “If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be”...here he paused to take his wife’s hand....”Lady Churchill’s second husband.”<sup>3</sup>

### Husbands Love Your Wife!

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*Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

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Sacrificial Love –

*Husbands, love your wives* – This is a clear command.

During the time of this letter, marriage in the world was a mockery and in shambles.

Demosthenes said, “We have courtesans for the sake of pleasure; we have concubines for the sake of daily cohabitation; we have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately, and of having a faithful guardian for all our household affairs.”

Socrates said, “Is there anyone to whom you entrust more serious matters than to your wife...and is there anyone to whom you talk less?”<sup>4</sup> (Hughes, 1990)

Paul used the ancient Greek word *agape* here. In the Greek, there are four different words we translate love. There is an important difference between the words, and illuminates the text as the apostle Paul chose the Greek word *agape* in this instance.

*Eros* is *erotic* love. It refers to love driven by *desire*.

*Storgē* is familial love, natural affection. The kind of love between a parent and child or between family members in general. It is love driven by *blood*.

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<sup>3</sup> James Humes, *Churchill, Speaker of the Century* (Briarcliff Manor, NY: Stein and Day/Scarborough House, 1980)

<sup>4</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians, The Mystery of the Body of Christ* (Wheaton, IL; Crossway, 1990) 190

*Philia* is the love of deep friendship and partnership (Philadelphia, the city of Brotherly Love). It might be described as the highest love man is capable of, without God's help. It is *fondness*, or love driven by *common interests and affection*.

*Agape* is different from *Eros*, *storgē*, and *philia* as they each speak about emotional love, a love that is "*felt*". These describe a spontaneous love that comes from the heart. Paul *assumes* that *eros* (desire) and *phileo* (fondness) are already present in the marriage. *Agape* is a love more of *decision* than of the *feeling*. *Agape* chooses to love the undeserving.

"Agape has to do with the mind: it is not simply an emotion which rises unbidden in our hearts; it is a principle by which we deliberately live."  
(Barclay, 1976)

Therefore, *Agape* less to do with *feelings* – and more to do with *decisions*.

Strictly speaking, *agape* can't be defined as "God's love," because men are said to *agape* (make a conscious effort to) sin and follow the world (John 3:19 and 1 John 2:15). Yet it can be defined as a sacrificial, giving, and absorbing love. *Agape* has little to do with emotion; but has much to do with self-denial for the sake of another.

It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment, given to the unlovable or unappealing even when it is rejected.

*Agape* love gives and loves because it wants to; and expects nothing in return.

Many men today may want to read this passage and think that Paul is saying, "Husbands, be kind to your wives." Or "husbands, be nice to your wives." Although that might be a big improvement in many marriages. But what Paul really meant is, "Husbands, continually decide to practice self-denial for the sake of your wives."

*Agape* then is the standard and example of a Christian husband's love.

"...even as Christ also loved the church" - Jesus' *attitude* towards the church is the blueprint for the way a Christian husband's is to love to his wife. A loveless marriage doesn't please God and does not fulfill His purpose.

The Apostle Paul taught two concepts at the same time. He is teaching about the nature of the relationship between husband and wife, and the relationship between Christ and His Church. Each one illustrates important principles about the other.

It demonstrates that Jesus loves his church with a *special* love. Jesus loves the world and died for the world; but just as a husband can have a general love for everyone, he must also have a *special* love for his bride.

The big difference between how a husband loves his wife and how Jesus loves the church, and I suppose that there might be many, is that the Lord Jesus loves his church unselfishly. Jesus has a constant, enduring, and a hearty love for His people. That is the way the Christian husband is to love his wife.

“...and gave Himself for her” - Jesus' *action* towards the church then is the pattern. This helps us define what *agape* love is all about: it is self-sacrificing love. How should a husband love his wife? As Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. What did that involve? Perhaps the best statement concerning that matter is in Philippians 2:5-8, where it shows that the focus of Jesus was on the church. It was for the church that He did what He did, not for Himself.

***Philippians 2:5-8*** *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Some husbands think that because God said they are the head of the home and the wife is obligated to submit to them that they do not have to be humble, lay down their lives, and sacrifice for the benefit of their wife. They need to understand the difference in thinking between worldly headship and godly headship.

Worldly headship says, "I am your head, so you take your orders from me and must do whatever I want."

Godly headship says, "I am your head, so I must care for you and serve you."

Worldly submission says, "You must submit to me, so here are the things I want you to do for me."

Godly submission says, "You must submit to me, so I am accountable before God for you. I must care for you and serve you."

This is not the height of romantic love as the world knows it. This type of love will not fill “Glamour Magazine” or “Sixteen Magazine. The love a husband is to have for his wife, Agape, isn't love based on looks, image, and the ability to be sophisticated. This is love expressed through *sacrifice*.

## Husbands Love Your Wife Like Your Life Depended On It!

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*Ephesians 5:26-27 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

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### Sanctifying Love

*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,* - When Jesus gave Himself for the church on the cross, it provided cleansing from every stain sin makes. Since the work of Jesus on the cross comes to us through the Word of God and the preached word, it can be said that we are washed of water by the word.

When Paul wrote *the washing of water by the word*, he used the ancient Greek word *rhema*. It refers to the *spoken* word of God Himself. There is something cleansing about being under the teaching of the Word. The Word of God, like the action in a clothes washer, prepares the listener to hear the desires of God. Therefore the listener that harkens to the Word, is washed clean of sin and is purified by the Word.

Obviously, a husband cannot spiritually cleanse his wife from sin in the same way Jesus cleanses the church. But he must take an active, caring interest in his wife's spiritual health. As the priest of the home, he helps her keep "clean" before the Lord.

*That he might present it to himself a glorious church* - This means that Jesus Himself, through love, is filled with pride concerning His bride, the church. A Christian husband should love his wife in such a way as he is filled with pride with his bride, his wife.

*"...not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."* – The action of Jesus love to his bride, has enabled the bride to be spiritually clean, without wrinkle and without harm. In the same way, a husband that loves his bride, enables the wife to live a life of holiness before God. The husband insures that the wife is "clean, without wrinkles, holy and without harm." What a beautiful example.

## Husbands Love Your Wife As Yourself

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*Ephesians 5:28-29* So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. **29** For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

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This is the application of the principle of the duty of a husband

Self-Love

*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself* - Paul gave three reasons for a Christian wife to be submissive to her husband. In addressing the Christian husbands, Paul also gave three reasons to love their wife:

First, husbands should love their wife because that is what love is.

Second, they should love their wife because the relationship between husband and wife has a pattern: the relationship of Jesus and His church.

The third reason is that the Christian husband must love his wife because you are one flesh.

*So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies* - The single word "as" is important. Paul did not say, "So ought men to love their wives in the same way as they love their bodies." That is narcissistic and not what God intends. The meaning is, "So ought men to love their wives because they *are* their own bodies."

A man must love his wife as he would his body, as a part of himself. As Eve was a part of Adam, taken out of his side, so the wife is to the man because she is a part of him. The reality of this union must dominate the husband's thinking and actions in marriage.

This means for that success in the marriage relationship, we must think and understand. The world relies upon overly romantic ideas about love and upon feelings to make marriage work, and never really makes a person think and understand about marriage.

*He that loveth his wife loveth himself* - Simply said, when you love your wife, *you benefit yourself*. Perhaps it is better to put it in the negative: *when you neglect your wife, you neglect yourself, and it will come back to hurt you.*

We all know what it is like to neglect something - like a noise or a maintenance issue on an automobile - and it comes back to hurt us. Husbands, it is *even truer* regarding your wife, because she is

part of you. Only a fool neglects his own broken arm or infected leg; yet there are many foolish husbands who hurt or neglect their wives and they do and will suffer from it.

*For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it,-* Any man in his right mind is going to take care of himself, even if it is just in the sense of feeding and clothing and caring for his own body. He knows that if he doesn't, he is going to suffer for it. In the same way, once we know the Biblical fact of this unity, if we are in our right minds we will nourish and cherish our wives because she is part of us.

“...even as the Lord the church” - The Biblical principle of *one flesh* is dominant in the relationship between the husband and the wife. When God defined the marriage in Genesis he decreed that they should become “*one flesh*.”<sup>5</sup>

There is *one flesh* of life: Because they are one flesh, they share life as it is meant to be shared.

There is *one flesh* of service: Because they are one flesh, they become co-workers with God.

There is *one flesh* of feeling: Because they are one flesh, they feel each other's hurts and highs.

There is *one flesh* of mutual necessity: Because they are one flesh, they cannot exist without each other and without God.

There is *one flesh* of possession: Because they are one flesh, as Christians, they share in the riches of God's glory both now and in the age to come

There is *one flesh* of future destiny: Because they are one flesh, their life is filled with promise and one day they will be glorified with Him.

#### Conclusion

In my Bible, I have two questions written in my margin. The first one is: Wives, do you love you husband enough to LIVE for him? And the second one says: “Husbands, do you love your wife enough to DIE for her?”

To me that is the essence of what Paul is describing on God's Design for Marriage.

*Robert C. Crowder*

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<sup>5</sup> Genesis 2:24