Husbands, Love Your Wives
Scripture: Ephesians 5:25-33
Code: 80-383

Well last week we started talking a little bit about the family and I began by talking more directly to the single people and I have a few more words for you again tonight. I hope there have been some engagements during the week since I…I don't know, but it would be nice if there had been some. Part of the problem in the world in which we live is you have too many choices. It was a lot better when you lived in a village and there were eight girls to choose from, and that was the way it was.

You know, the illusion in our culture for those people who are single is that somewhere there's this perfect person hanging out there and you just have to find that person. Nothing could be further from the truth. All you really want is a godly partner, all you want is somebody who loves the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'll give you a little bit of a warning. You can find your ideal mate, you can find the one that looks and talks and acts and behaves the way you think the perfect…the perfect spouse or perspective spouse should. They may look like you would want them to look, and they may be interested in the things you would want them to be interested in. They may have a wonderful sense of humor and be intellectually interesting and all of those kinds of things. And you can marry that person and that person may feel the same way about you. And if you don't walk in the Spirit, that marriage will have massive problems.

Or you can find someone who loves Christ and has a heart to serve the Lord, and walk in the Holy Spirit, and if you're in that same path and that person is in that same path, you will grow into the kind of union that will fill your life with complete joy and blessing. So stop looking for the perfect person somewhere. Stop scanning all of the unknown and available web sites. Stick with the people that the Lord has brought into your life and the people that you know and the people that are around you and the people that love the Lord and believe the things that you believe and find someone who walks in the Spirit and longs to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and watch the Lord make a wonderful and complete and lasting relationship that will be profoundly, profoundly blessed.

Marriage doesn't have to be conflict. There will be conflict in marriage because there's conflict in life. But I do not agree with the great General Montgomery who said, "Gentlemen, don't even think of marriage until you've mastered the art of war." I wouldn't agree with that. I think that's…I think that's extending this thing beyond a reasonable level.

But I do understand that marriage does pose conflict because when you slam two centers together permanently, they're going to rub each other the wrong way because that's what sin does. But the

answer to all of that, of course, is to be obedient to Christ, to love Christ, to love each other and to walk in the power of the Spirit and watch the Lord overcome those things and fill your life with profound joy and blessing beyond anything that could be experienced in singleness unless that is what God has particularly designed you for.

If you go back to the book of Genesis, for just a moment, in your thinking, and maybe it would be good to do that for a minute. If you go back in to Genesis chapter 1 and we sort of start where you have to start with this kind of discussion about marriage, we are reminded in Genesis chapter 1 verses 27 and 28, “That God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them, male and female He created them. God blessed them and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’” That’s the basic principle. Men and women come together and have children. They multiply, they fill the earth, they subdue the earth and they rule over the earth.

This is expanded in chapter 2 down in verse 18, “The Lord after making man says it’s not good for the man to be alone. I’ll make him a helper suitable for him. Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, every bird of the sky, brought them to the man to see what he could call them and whatever the man called the living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, the birds of the sky, and every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept, then He, being God, took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man and brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.’”

God chose a bride for Adam and I still think it’s the best way. You know, that would be my way as a father and a grandfather, to make the choice myself for all the kids and grandkids in my family. It doesn’t always work out that way in life. But here was a situation where there was no relationship prior to the fact that Adam woke up in the morning and he was married. And he had no choice because there was only one woman who existed in the entire universe. But walking together with God, a relationship of lasting love was cultivated there and God did through them what He said He was going to do through male and female, He produced children.

This is God’s design. A beautiful union came out of that marriage, a kind of co-regency as they came together. Marriage really is for four things. First of all, it is for children, “Be fruitful and multiply.” And children, as we heard read tonight in the Psalm, are a heritage from the Lord. They are a blessing from heaven.

Secondly, marriage is to eliminate solitude. “It is not good for man to be alone.” It isn’t good for a lot of reasons. It isn’t good because man needs a complement to his life, he needs companionship, he

needs friendship, he needs accountability. Marriage is designed then to produce children and to provide friendship to eliminate solitude.

Thirdly, to prevent immorality—to prevent immorality. That's 1 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 2 where the Apostle Paul says, "We need to be married to prevent immorality."

And there's a fourth reason for marriage and I don't know how you would refer to it in modern vernacular. But in Genesis 26:6, 7, 8 and 9, it describes Isaac and it says, "He was sporting with his wife." Now I suppose it could have meant jogging if you want to think that way. But if you actually look at the NAS it says caressing…caressing. This is an element of marriage that you have to recognize, and that is the sheer joy and the sheer exhilaration and the sheer love and affection that comes in that union. Yes it is for children, yes it is to eliminate solitude, yes it is to prevent immorality, but it is also to provide loving, loving affection. And that is the way God designed it. And, of course, then the Fall comes in the third chapter of Genesis and the war begins because Satan now is fixed in opposition against God and against all that God has ordained and all that God has created which makes Satan the enemy of marriage, and Satan works very hard to destroy marriages. We're even instructed in Scripture not to tear asunder anything that God has brought together with regard to marriage. Satan attacks marriage.

People in marriages attack each other because of their own sinfulness, their own fallenness and because there's conflict as we read in Genesis between the man and the woman as they vie for power in the union. So immediately upon the Fall, marriage is under assault from the outside by Satan and from the inside by the conflict that rises in the hearts of the two people that make up that union.

And then everything starts to really come apart in the book of Genesis. In chapter 4 you have polygamy. In chapter 9 you have evil, sexual thoughts. In chapter 16 of Genesis you have adultery. In chapter 19 you have gross homosexuality. Chapter 34 you have fornication. You have in chapter 34 again unequal yoking. In Genesis 38 you have incest. In Genesis 38 again you have prostitution. Genesis 39, you have an attempted evil seduction in the case of Joseph. And so the corruption of this wonderful, magnificent union that God has designed comes fast and it comes in all these various forms. And all of a sudden the world is a world of polygamy. And it's a world of adultery and homosexuality, and fornication, and unequal yoking, and incest, and prostitution, and it expands and expands rapidly to the degree that it is so vile by the time you get to the sixth chapter of Genesis, God saying, "I'm going to kill everybody on the planet except for eight people." That's how bad it is, just eight people.

Well after the Flood, sinners were still sinners. Men and women were still sinners, still born alienated from God, born with an operative sin principle in their lives that has dominating power. It's painful to make a marriage work before the Flood after the Fall. It's painful to make a marriage work after the

Flood but there's at least something that's a little better. Before the Flood people lived for 900 years. Now you can be happily married for 10, 20, 30, 40, 50. I'm not sure you could make 850, I'm pretty sure you might not be able to. So there's some grace and mercy in that. It's hard to make a marriage work. But can you imagine intimate conflict going on for centuries? That's hard to grasp. So there is a certain mercy, all you have to do is make it work for less than one century by God's design.

But I really do believe that marital problems have always been the source of the deepest pain in the human heart because it strikes us at the most intimate level of life and the most intense level of life, and the most personal level of life, and the most constant level of life. The sin that gets into our family and into our marriage is the real culprit in the curse. The curse strikes at the basis of our most necessary relationship. We need to be married for the reasons that I gave you. We need partners in life for fulfillment, for the joys of marriage, for the accountability of marriage, the friendship, all of those things, for the procreation which then produces these greater and multiplied joys, we need to be married. It is the grace of life. And because we are cursed and sinful people, then that brings the curse right into our most necessary relationship. And it makes—it makes marriage a very, very difficult situation and it's probably more difficult in our culture today because the people who are trying to be married today don't have a generation behind them that can model what a good marriage looks like. We've had enough bad marriage generations now that we have a whole generation of young people growing up who have no model of what a good marriage looks like. They're victims of the sexual revolution, the homosexual revolution, and the Women's Liberation Movement. And marriage has been the sacrificial Lamb on the altar of all those aberrations.

And yet, what is the most popular kind of song in our culture? What is the category in which the most popular kind of songs exist? They would be called love songs, wouldn't they? Romantic songs because they're still in the heart of every man and every woman a deep profound longing to be truly and genuinely and lastingly loved and cared for by another person, and particularly another person of the opposite sex which is why homosexuality is such a horrendous lie and deception, because there can never be in that kind of deviation and aberration the fulfillment of what the heart really longs for because it has to be complementarian and that's designed by God to be a man and a woman. But our culture constantly fantasizes about the perfect girl and the perfect man and the perfect relationship and the perfect love, and the beautiful face, and the attractive body in hopes that we can find someone who is this idol, who is this sort of Aristotelian model human being that sets the pattern for all other human beings, and we want to find that person and we watch it happen in Hollywood as people—the beautiful people, the wealthy people, the people who have it all find each other and the relationships last days or weeks before they explode in their faces.

How can we have a kind of relationship that just doesn't happen, how can we attain to that? The world keeps singing about it, writing songs about it, making movies about it, writing books about it, a marriage union that lasts where there's no boredom, where there's no unfaithfulness, where there's no breakup, where there's no pain, there's no leaving, there's no lovelessness. It's just bliss till death,

a relationship that fills everybody's needs and gets sweeter and richer as the days go by.

Well, I have to say for the people in the world, it's not going to happen, it can't happen, it won't happen. Oh maybe there's that occasional union where people get along so very well that they're friends for life. But for marriage to be everything that it ought to be, it has to be a marriage in Christ. It has to be a marriage in Christ. It has to be a marriage both monitored and empowered by the Holy Spirit. And that's what we're learning. Let's go to Ephesians 5.

For a marriage to work, it has to be a marriage that is monitored by and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Here in Ephesians 5:22 to the end of the chapter, we have the greatest treatise on marriage ever written. This is it. The parallel one in Colossians 3 is equal to this only it's a little briefer so this is a richer one. That's why I say it's the greatest treatise on marriage ever written. And the Apostle Paul starts by talking about a wife and a husband and then goes into chapter 6 talking about parents and children.

But what is behind his conversation with us about marriage is chapter 5 and verse 18. "Be filled with the Spirit." Everything that He says after that comes out of that reality. If you are filled with the Spirit, you will have joy, you will speak to one another in Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing, making melody with your heart to the Lord. You will have gratitude. You will be always giving thanks for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father, and you will exhibit the humility of submission. You will be submitting yourself to one another in the fear of Christ. And we said then, a Spirit-filled life is a life of singing with joy, a life of saying thanks, and a life of submitting to one another. Submission is a general principle that is within the experience of all believers in all relationships…in all relationships. And what we mean by submission is simply this, "I humble Myself to serve you. I humble Myself to minister to you. I put Myself in a position to give to you what you need, what you require. I look not on my own things but the things of others."

Even someone who is an elder in the church, or a pastor, or a leader, is in the position of submitting his life completely to the meeting of the needs of the congregation as submission. You might think that someone who is in a position of leadership is only in a position of dominance and authority. There is that kind of leadership, but that's not biblical leadership. Whoever would be chief among you, Jesus said, let him be your—what?—your servant, your slave.

We're not like the Gentiles. We don't lord it over people. Spiritual leadership is simply submitting oneself to the accomplishment of the needs of those for whom He is responsible. That flows right into marriage. In marriage the husband must submit himself, humble himself, lower himself, condescend, come down as Christ did, have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus who thought it not robbery to hang on to His equality with God, but humbled himself, took on the form of a slave, came all the way down to death, even death on the cross.

We like to talk even in the Christian community about how wives are to submit to their husbands, but we aren't quite as eager to talk about how quickly and how necessarily husbands must submit to their wives. The husband is forever asking one question, "How can I minister to my wife? How can I meet the needs that my wife has? How can I provide all that she needs? How can I make this marriage a haven of security and rest and fulfillment and joy for her?"

The Scripture is placing that burden on the husband, even though he is the head in the sense that he is the one who is to protect and provide and care for her and the children. At the same time, he is to be the one who in his protection and provision and care meets her every need as much as he possibly can. So we all submit.

It even comes that way in dealing with children. As a parent, I have to submit to the needs of my children. I have to look at my children and I have to reorder my life in order to meet their needs. Their physical needs have to be met. I might not want to do with my spare time what my children need me to do, but I do it because I'm devoted to meeting their needs. I might rather be occupied doing something other than caring for all of the spiritual needs of my children, but that's my responsibility before God, to be the spiritual leader of my children. And so I look at their lives, I look at their needs and I set my life on a course to meet their needs. That's submission.

So we're all bound up in this kind of submissive attitude. Now we talked about the wife last time, didn't we? Wives, be subject, and that isn't in the text, it's in italics there, it's implied from verse 21. It literally says, "Wives, to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church. He Himself being the Savior of the body, but as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives to their husbands in everything."

So last week we looked at that, and we talked about the duty of the wife to be submissive to her husband in the same way that Christ is submissive to the Lord of the church…that the church, I should say, is submissive to Christ who is the Lord of the church, so we submit as wives to our husbands as the church submits to Christ, knowing that Christ cares for us, meets our needs, provides for us, protects us, preserves us, supplies all that is necessary. He does that for the church, the husband does that for the wife, the wife who knows that submits, rests in that confidence.

Now for tonight, let's talk about the husband a little bit. And by the way, there are on the Grace To You website a whole lot of messages on the fulfilled family with much more detail then I'm giving you in this bit of a reprise in kind of a summary look at this. There are also other passages in the New Testament that are considered in the more lengthy treatments. You might want to consider those as well. There is a new book that has come out on divorce called The Divorce Dilemma. That book is available now, if you're asking questions about divorce. The other day I got an interesting phone call from the people at Focus on the Family who asked me if I'd come and do a couple of radio programs

because they want to promote that book which is a biblical view of divorce. That's very encouraging to me, because a lot of people need help in that, so we'll be doing that in a few weeks. There is more material, is what I'm saying, available.

Now the duty of the husband, let's look at the duty of the husband, coming down to verse 25. It actually stretches all the way to the end of this chapter. But we'll pick it up in verse 25. "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her so that He might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she would be holy and blameless. "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife, loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ also does the church because we are members of His body." A very lengthy and very detailed set of instructions for the husband.

Keep the context in mind. We're talking about Spirit-filled people who already understand the principle of submission. The husband understands the necessary submission to his wife's needs and the meeting of those needs to provide for her a haven in which her heart can rest.

The husband's command is very clear. It's a single command. Husbands, love your wives. Love your wives. That is the command. There is no command to take authority over your wife. That's not the command. That is not the command. Is the husband the head? Absolutely he's the head. We saw that, didn't we, in 1 Corinthians 11, the husband is the head of the wife, Christ is the head of the man, God is the head of Christ. But the command is not to take authority. It doesn't say a word about that. It doesn't say take authority. It doesn't say rule over your wife. It doesn't say order her around. It doesn't say command her. It doesn't say subjugate her, subject her. It doesn't say dominate her. It says love your wives…love your wives. And the word for love is from the verb *agapao* which is the most intense, most divine, most magnanimous, most sacrificial, most humble kind of love. It's the love of the will. There are other words for love in the Greek language. There's the word *eros* from which you get erotic, that's a sexual kind of love. There's the word *phileo*, the verb *phileo* which is the word that is in the word Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, it means that, that kind of a normal, human affection. There is even a word for family love and that word is used when the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy and says that people in the society, the worldly society have lost their natural affection. That is their family love. So there are words for family love, and erotic love, and brotherly love. But this is the word for the love of the will. This is the word that is the most magnanimous, the most far-reaching, and the most intentional. This is…this is a word for love that is not defined by the solicitation of the one loved. This is the love of the will. This is loving because it is right to love, loving because you will to love. It doesn't mean the person is not attractive, but this word is defined as a word that expresses one's intentionality.

This is how we are to love because we determine to love, because we will to love. This is, of course, defined for us as the kind of love the Lord has for His church. He does not love us because we are lovable. He did not save us because we were lovable. He didn't save you and not somebody else down the street from you because you were more lovable than the person down the street. You might have picked your life partner because that person was more lovable in your judgment than the other people you knew. That is not how God chose you. He predetermined by His own will to set His love on you and to then spend His love relentlessly on you forever and ever and ever. And it is that kind of love that a husband is to set upon the woman that he takes as his wife.

It is the manner of our love. Let's start with that word "manner," we'll break it down into several parts. This love, the manner of this love, "as Christ loved the church" and you can go all the way back and say, Romans 5:8, "He loved us when we were enemies, when we were alienated, when we were unlovable and unlovely and unloving and before we loved Him. We only love Him because He first loved us. That's what we're talking about. You set your love by your will because it's right and it's noble, and it's the way Christ set His love on us. That's the manner of it.

If you were to remind yourself, and I'll help you with that, of Romans chapter 8 and how that chapter ended, you would have there an illustration of this kind of love. Chapter 8 of Romans, verse 35, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" We learn here that this is a love from which one will not be separated. "Will tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword?" Is that going to separate us? No. "In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." And Paul goes on to say, "Neither death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So Christ loves us with an inseparable love, with an undying love, with a love that cannot be diminished and it cannot be replaced. You think about loving your wife that way. You love your wife with a love that couldn't be broken by tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. It couldn't be broken by death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers height depth or any other created thing in the universe. This is how Christ loved His church. This is how a man is to love his wife.

Many years ago, early in church history, a man named John Chrysostom, a great preacher, wrote this, translated into Olde English. "Hast thou seen the measure of obedience? Hear also the measure of love. Wouldst thou that thy wife shouldest obey Thee as the church does Christ? Then have care yourself for her as Christ for the church. And if it be needful that thou shouldest give thy life further, or be cut to pieces, a thousand times, or endure anything whatever, refuse it not. Christ brought His church to His feet by His great care, not by threats, nor any such thing. So do thou conduct thyself toward thy wife." Chrysostom is saying if you were cut in a thousand pieces, it shouldn't diminish your love for your wife.

And Roman law was very different from that. Cato, writing about Roman Law, said, “If you catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you can kill her without a trial. But if she were to catch you in an act of infidelity, she wouldn’t venture to touch you with her finger, indeed she has no right.” That’s how it was in the ancient Roman world, when Paul was writing and confronting the church with these things. Very different than the world of that time. Men had wives for social reasons. They had concubines for sexual reasons. And here we find the instruction of the Word of God, “Love your wife, love your wife the way Christ loves His church with this undying, unbreakable love.”

Peter points out three sort of duties that that love takes. Look at 1 Peter chapter 3—1 Peter chapter 3, just the opening verses which we mentioned briefly last time, where it talks about wives being submissive to their husbands. But down in verse 7 he addresses the husbands and he says, “You husbands in the same way live with your wives in an understanding way.”

I can tell you from personal experience this is the one thing that wives say all the time. You don’t listen to me, you don’t understand me, you don’t hear what I’m saying, I wish you knew me better, you don’t know what I’m thinking, and on and on. We work hard on it, we never attain success, I don’t think. But live with your wives in an understanding way. That is understanding, sensitivity to needs and feelings.

And then he goes on to say, “As with someone weaker.” So there’s consideration and then there’s actually chivalry, she is the weaker vessel, the weaker vessel. She needs strength. She needs support. She needs to be held up. She needs to be encouraged. She needs to be safe. Not only physically safe but relationally safe. Since she’s a woman, she needs the strength of a man and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life so that your prayers will not be hindered.

How you love your wife, you love her this way—with consideration, and understanding, and sensitivity, and chivalry, and communing together with her, understanding you’re equal heirs of the grace of life which is, of course, marriage in Christ. Together in deep intimate commitment and communion, your prayers will be heard and answered.

So we are to love as Christ loved the church. Let me break that out for a little bit, okay? It was a sacrificial love. Go back to Ephesians 5 for a minute. It says there, “Love your wives as Christ loved the church,” and here’s the first expression of it, “and gave Himself up for her.” Gave Himself up, the Spirit-filled husband loves his wife not for what she can do for him, but for what he can do for her. And I say this to you, young men, find a woman that you can love, find a woman, determine to love her. Find a woman to whom you can give your life and all your abilities and all your powers and all your energies in the way Christ did for the church, a love that knows no tyranny, it only knows sacrifice.

Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Find a woman and give yourself up for her. Work harder to provide her physical needs. Invest in her spiritually. Care for her. Shelter her. Protect her. Provide for her. Preserve her. Give your life for her. Find one who loves Christ, who should be under the care of a man, who should be under the protection of a husband and become that to her that Christ is to His own church. This is the sacrifice that defines what a husband does.

By the way, love is always a verb. Love is always a verb, it is always in action, it is always in motion. And a Spirit-filled love is a love that is always sacrificing on behalf of another person.

I tell this to young people from time to time and it will take us to a second point. If somebody says “I love you,” and then they want you to sin with them, that’s not love, that’s lust, that’s not love. Because the second thing to say about husbands loving their wives the way Christ loved the church is that Christ loved the church sacrificially, and secondly, He loved the church with a purifying love—go down to verse 26—so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she should be holy and blameless.

When a young man says to you as a young lady, “I love you and I want to take away your purity,” that’s not love, run away, flee from that man. That’s not love. The same would be true on the other side. If a young lady says to a young man, “I love you,” and wants to steal that young man’s purity, that’s not love. Love purifies. This is the beauty of it. That’s the illustration that we have with Christ. He loved His church. He gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her. And we would say that in the marriage context that the spouse or the would-be spouse would seek the purity of that partner, both that spiritual purity that comes with a true understanding of the Word of God, true salvation, a pursuit of sanctification, and the physical purity that is a partner to that. Christ purifies His church, please notice, and He sanctifies it, cleanses it by the washing of water with the Word…with the Word.

You as a husband have the responsibility to wash your wife with the Word of God, to provide continual washing with the truth of holy Scripture, so that all the stains are taken away. That’s what it says in verse 27, He wants to present to Himself a church in all her glory, with no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and blameless.

Paul may have been thinking about a custom that was actually popular in ancient Mediterranean world, the custom of bathing the bride in holy water. The Catholics didn’t invent holy water, by the way, there was holy water in ancient pagan religions as well. And one of the ways that it was used, the bath was prepared with supposed holy water that had been sanctified by some ritual, and the bride would be bathed in that holy water before the wedding as a symbol of purification before her husband accepted her. In Athens, the bride was bathed in the waters of the Callirrhoe which was deemed sacred, symbolized cleansing from all previous relationships, any previous defilement before entrance and entre into marital life. Maybe Paul had that in the back of his mind, but whatever he had

in his mind, the principle of marriage is simply this, marriage is to be a purifying experience, a purifying experience.

You find a very similar expression from the Apostle Paul toward the end of his second letter to the Corinthians. I know you will remember this. Chapter 11, he says, “I am jealous—verse 2—for you with a godly jealousy. I betrothed you to one husband that is Christ talking to the Corinthian church, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. I’m afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds would be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” Paul was concerned about the Corinthians’ defecting into heresy and wrong theology and error and it was a kind of spiritual adultery that would defile them. He wanted to present to Christ a pure virgin. And that is the picture that should be followed through in marriage; marriage should be the purifying of every partner, the purifying of every partner. You don’t expose your partner to things that are impure, doctrinally, theologically, spiritually, or morally. You are the protector of your wife’s purity if you’re a husband. That’s the picture here. You keep her away from things that are impure. You never expose her to those things.

True love is concerned always for the purity of its object. And any so-called love that takes liberties with that and pursues sin is a false kind of love. Any love that makes people coarse, crude, hard, any love that exposes them to images pornographic, immoral that create impure thoughts in their minds is not the pure love we’re talking about here. Any love that weakens moral fiber, diminishes character is a false love because true love, the love with which Christ loves the church, seeks the absolute purity of its object, sacrificially so…sacrificially so.

So, men, this is how you have to view your marriage. You sacrifice for your wife. You offer the ultimate sacrifice, whatever that might be, even your life, and you pursue your purity at all costs—at all costs. Just as Christ does His own church and wants to present it to Himself without blame and without spot. So it is a sacrificial love and it is a purifying love.

Thirdly, it is a caring love—it is a caring love. And we see this in verses 28 and following. “Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife, loves himself. No one ever yet hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church because we are members of His body.” The analogy is very simple. The Lord takes care of His church. That’s the point. Love your wife as your own body.

What does that mean? You care for your body. Whose teeth do you brush in the morning? Whose hair do you comb? Whose body do you clothe? You take care of yourself. That’s a given. That’s a given. He’s not saying learn to take care of yourself, some of you need to learn to do that a little better than you’re doing it, but for the most part…you feed yourself, you wash yourself, you do what you’re supposed to do for yourself.

And what our Lord is saying here through the Holy Spirit and the instruction from the Apostle Paul is give the same attention to your wives that you do to yourself because you're really one flesh and do it, verse 29 says, because if you don't, it's a kind of self-suicide. You're hating yourself. The idea is to nourish and cherish your own wife—to nourish and cherish your own wife—verse 29. Nourish, that means to provide what will bring life and growth and well-being and cherish, literally to make warm. I guess you could sort of stretch and say to cuddle, to embrace, to provide security. And so there's this idea of caring, meeting needs, fulfilling desires.

Nobody ever hates his own flesh. But everybody nourishes and cherishes it. But Christ does that for the church and you need to do that for your wife.

The word "nourish" actually comes from *ek trepho* which means to feed, feed. It's a word used in the Bible primarily of nurturing children, providing nurture, providing a climate of growth and development. You know, this is kind of the other side of the working wife situation which is a serious problem, very serious problem. Your wife is not supposed to provide for, and nourish, and cherish you. You're supposed to provide that for her. And 1 Timothy 5:8 says, "If you don't provide for your own family, you're worse than an unbeliever because even unbelievers do that."

Something is seriously wrong when a man sees his wife as the source of provision for himself. Something is equally wrong when a man sees his wife as a cook and a washer woman and a babysitter and the physical partner. Man has to see his wife as a treasure to care for…a treasure to care for, to cherish, nourish in the same way the Lord does His church.

Throughout Scripture the man is the provider, the man is the protector, the man is the preserver, the man is the nourisher, the cherisher as Christ is for His church. The church really provides nothing. We cast all our care on Him, He cares for us.

Even the curse demonstrates that the man is going to be the provider because the man is cursed in his labor, isn't he? When the curse comes to Adam, "Cursed are you when you go to work," you're going to be cursed because by the sweat of your brow you're going to work and it's going to be hard to produce food. The curse on the woman, where does that come? In her—what? Childbearing because that's her domain. That's the area in which each will function. The man will be the provider; the woman will be the child-bearer.

You are the provider, you are the protector, you are the caretaker of that woman in every sense. This is how a marriage becomes everything that people want a marriage to be. And so much of it lays on the fulfillment, the responsibility of the husband. Wives, they rest in all of this care and provision.

So it's a sacrificial love, it's a purifying love, it's a caring love. And finally, it's an unbreakable love—it is an unbreakable love. Verse 31, "A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife," and this is quoted from Genesis 2:24 as we read earlier, "the two shall become one flesh—one flesh." Indivisible, the indivisible number, one. Two becoming one flesh, an indivisible, intimate, indesolvable union, two becoming one. "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." Individual identity is lost. There is no more individual identity. We are lost in each other, leave and cleave. Oneness of mind, oneness of heart, oneness of purpose, oneness spiritually, oneness sexually that ends in a child that is the one product of that union.

That is why all adultery, all fornication, all unfaithfulness are condemned in Scripture because they violate that oneness, that union. That is why Malachi 2:16 says, "God hates divorce." God hates divorce. It happens, God orders how the marriage is to be dissolved if it is to be dissolved legitimately. There are grounds for divorce. God understands that because of the hardness of heart, but He hates it because it shatters this magnificent institution that God has made that passes righteousness from one generation to the next.

So, men, love your wives sacrificially, purifyingly, caringly and permanently. Be absolutely unbreakable in your devotion and your commitment to your wives. Make a covenant with your wife that follows the pattern of the covenant Christ made with the church and nothing can separate the church from Him, right? Nothing should ever separate the two of you either. Would Christ ever cast away the church? No. Then nor should a man ever cast away his wife or a wife her husband.

Now there's a motive behind all this and that's in verses 32 and 33, the motive in verse 32, the mystery is great but I'm speaking with reference to Christ and the church. What is that telling you? Marriage is very, very sacred—very sacred. What is a mystery? New revelation, something in the past hidden, and now revealed. The mystery is this; this has never been said before in holy Scripture, never in the Old Testament that marriage is to follow the pattern of Christ's relationship to the church. Marriage is sacred. The church is one with Christ, that's the mystery. The church is one with Christ, and that's the picture of marriage. It is sacred by virtue of its association with the relationship between Christ and His church.

And then a summation in verse 33. "Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself." Just the summation of what we studied. "And the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."

Pretty simple, isn't it? All that in just a tiny little portion of Scripture, verses 22 to 33, but it says a world of truth. If we follow the patterns that the Lord has laid down in our marriage, they will be all that we would want them to be and more than we would ever expect from them. But the element that has got to be there is the filling of the Holy Spirit, right? We have to go back to that so that our lives are under the control of the Holy Spirit at all times. The Word of Christ is dwelling richly in us and we're

walking in obedience to Him.

I don't know what condition your marriage is in, but I know what it can be. People say, "Well, I married the wrong person." Well that person is the right person now. Get over that idea and approach the marriage the way the Scripture tells us to. Walk in the Spirit and the Lord can bring joy and fulfillment into a relationship that has known conflict and bitterness. That can all change. The most important thing is that you be connected to Christ in a way that honors Him, exalts Him, walk in His Spirit, obey His Word. If two people are doing that, they can walk together, can't they, and know the fullness of blessing.

People say, "Well, there--I probably missed the person I should have married. No, you got the person you married and that's the person that God wants you to have for the rest of your life. And you can make of that marriage all that God wants it to be if you set the course the way the Scripture tells you to set the course.

Now next time we're going to follow up with the parents and children on Sunday night, next week, so be here for that, chapter 6. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for the clarity with which the Word speaks to us again on this subject in which there seems to be so much chaos and confusion. Help us to humble ourselves and follow the pattern of Holy Scripture to be what we ought to be to one another in our marriages. Lord, would You heal marriages even now that are not what they should be because people are not walking in the Spirit, they're not under the control of Your blessed Holy Spirit, they're not submitting to one another. They're not loving each other, respecting each other, humbling themselves. They're not seeking the purity of each other, not sacrificing for each other. We pray, Lord, that You would do a work in those relationships for their sake and for the sake of the children that will be influenced by that marriage. Bad marriages are generational tragedies; they send children reeling into the next generation and to their own marriages with all kinds of wrong experiences and wrong ideas and bitternesses. Give us good marriages, marriages that honor Christ, marriages that are full of joy and blessing so there could be another generation who will experience those same kinds of things, who will go into marriage hopeful, eager, happy, fulfilled and wanting to be everything that they can be so that that marriage can be all that they saw their own parent's marriage be.

Save us from the destruction that is going on, particularly in the church and may the church be a place of healthy marriages and a place where the gospel is passed with joy to the next generation. We thank You for the testimonies we heard tonight about that, from young people who have come to know You and now can look at the next generation, the generation that they bring into the world and raise them in the knowledge of Christ and give hope for another generation of what marriage should be. May the testimony of those who know Christ and love Christ be clear in a world where marriage is just completely disintegrating all around us and with it the entire culture. May our marriages be strong

and to Your glory. We pray in Christ’s name.

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