

Focus on the Family

Spirit-Filled Husbands

Ephesians 5:25-33

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Scripture

Today we continue our sermon series in Ephesians 5:21-6:9 that I am calling, “Focus on the Family.”

The governing command for this entire section is Ephesians 5:18, where Paul commanded Christians to “be filled with the Spirit.” Then Paul said being filled with the Spirit would have four consequences, or evidences (that correspond to the four participles in verses 19-21): fellowship (5:19a), worship (5:19b), gratitude (5:20), and submission (5:21).

This final consequence, or evidence, of *submission* (in Ephesians 5:21) then became for Paul the command for all that follows. Paul’s command of mutual submission is in fact the necessary foundation for the three sets of relationships (of wives and husbands, children and parents, and bondservants and masters) in Ephesians 5:22-6:9.

Last week, we examined Paul’s direction to Spirit-filled wives. Today, we will examine Paul’s direction to Spirit-filled husbands.

Let’s read about Spirit-filled husbands in Ephesians 5:25-33, although for the sake of context, I shall also read verses 18b and 21:

¹⁸ ...be filled with the Spirit, ...²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ....

²⁵ **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,** ²⁶ **that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,** ²⁷ **so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such**

thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,³⁰ because we are members of his body.³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:25-33)

Introduction

John MacArthur mentions in his book on *The Fulfilled Family* that several years ago, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an article titled, “The Seven Ages of the Married Cold.” It revealed the reaction of a husband to his wife’s colds during their first seven years of marriage. It went something like this:

The first year. “Sugar dumpling, I’m really worried about my baby girl. You’ve got a bad snuffle, and there’s no telling about these things with all this strep throat going around. I’m putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general checkup and a good rest. I know the food’s lousy, but I’ll be bringing your meals in from Rossini’s. I’ve already got it all arranged with the floor superintendent.”

The second year. “Listen, darling, I don’t like the sound of that cough. I called Doc Miller and asked him to rush over here. Now go to bed like a good girl, please? Just for papa.”

The third year. “Maybe you’d better lie down, honey; nothing like a little rest when you feel lousy. I’ll bring you something to eat. Have got any canned soup?”

The fourth year. “Now look, dear, be sensible. After you’ve fed the kids, washed the dishes, and finished the floor, you’d better lie down.”

The fifth year. “Why don’t you take a couple of aspirin?”

The sixth year. “I wish you’d just gargle or something, instead of sitting around all evening barking like a seal!”

The seventh year. “For Pete’s sake, stop sneezing! Are you trying to give me pneumonia?”¹

This is humorous but, sadly, true of too many marriages.

The Apostle Paul gives us God’s prescription for healthy marriages. His prescription applies only to Christians who are filled with the Spirit.

Lesson

The love of husbands in Ephesians 5:25-33 shows us Spirit-filled husbands.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. The Duty to Love (5:25a)
2. The Manner of Love (5:25b-31)
3. The Model for Love (5:32-33)

I. The Duty to Love (5:25a)

First, let’s look at the duty to love.

I mentioned last time that in Paul’s day the marriage bond was virtually meaningless. Wives had no value at all, and husbands had multiple relationships apart from their wives. So, Paul’s directions to husbands and wives was utterly radical. Paul was calling for a covenant renewal of marriage vows.

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *The Fulfilled Family* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981), n.p.

Paul's command to husbands is in verse 25a, **“Husbands, love your wives.”** Paul said (in verse 21) that among Christians there is to be a mutual submission to one another. In the marriage relationship, wives are to lead in submission and husbands are to lead in love.

But, what does **“love”** mean? What does it mean for a husband to **“love”** his wife? I like Walter Trobisch's definition:

Let me try to tell you what it really should mean if a fellow says to a girl, “I love you.” It means: You, you, you. You alone. You shall reign in my heart. You are the one whom I have longed for, without you I am incomplete. I will give everything for you, and I will give up everything for you, myself as well as all that I possess. I will love you alone, and I will work for you alone. And I will wait for you.... I will never force you, not even by words. I want to guard you, protect you and keep you from all evil. I want to share with you all my thoughts, my heart and my body—all that I possess. I want to listen to what you have to say. There is nothing I want to undertake without your blessing. I want to remain always at your side.²

Now, if a husband leads in loving his wife like that, then his wife will gladly lead in submitting to her husband.

II. The Manner of Love (5:25b-31)

Second, let's notice the manner of love.

How does a husband love his wife? Paul says that there are four ways in which a husband shows his love to his wife. Let's briefly examine them.

² Walter Trobisch, *I Loved a Girl* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1965), 3–4.

A. Love Is Sacrificial (5:25b)

First, love is sacrificial.

Paul said in verse 25b, “Husbands, love your wives, **as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**” Christ gave his life for his bride, the church. Every husband is called to such a sacrificial love for his wife.

Bryan Chapell tells the story of Dr. J. Robertson McQuilkin, a leader not only in his home but also in the evangelical world. In 1990, however, he resigned prematurely from the presidency of Columbia Bible College and Seminary because his wife Muriel, afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease, needed his care. During his last two years as president he wrote that it was increasingly difficult to keep Muriel at home. When she was with him she was content, but without him she became distressed and panic-stricken. Although the walk from their home to the school was a mile round trip, Muriel would often try to follow her husband to the office. Seeking him over and over she would sometimes make that trip ten times a day. When he took her shoes off at night, McQuilkin sometimes found her feet bloodied from all the walking. Washing her feet prepared him for a similar Christlike act that he ultimately performed for her. He sacrificed his position to take care of her.

That is the sacrificial love to which God calls husbands. A Christian husband leads by service. He heads his family through selfless love. He has the primary biblical responsibility in the home to set a spiritual standard by his own sacrifice to make God’s grace evident.

When Robertson McQuilkin recounted in *Christianity Today* his decision to resign his leadership as president of one of the nation’s prestigious evangelical institutions to care for his wife, the response was overwhelming. Husbands and wives

who read the account renewed their marriage vows; pastors told the story to their congregations; young people attested to a rekindled desire for a marriage commitment their culture had previously taught them to minimize and devalue. McQuilkin said, “It was a mystery to me [how so many were responding] until a distinguished oncologist, who lives constantly with dying people, told me, ‘Almost all women stand by their men, but few men stand by their women.’”³

Husbands, sacrificial love for your wives is simply living out the example of Christ’s love for the church. It is an expression of the gospel in your life, your marriage, and your home.

B. *Love Is Sanctifying (5:26-27)*

Second, love is sanctifying.

In verses 26-27, Paul said that a husband must love his wife **“that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”** Husbands are to love their wives in such a way that they grow in Christ. Husbands must lead their wives in spiritual matters.

Kent Hughes hits the mark when he asks, “When we [husbands read these verses], we cannot escape our huge responsibility. Is our wife more like Christ because she is married to us? Or is she like Christ in spite of us? Whatever our effect, our call is clear: *sanctifying love*.”⁴

³ Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 286–289.

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word

C. *Love Is Caring (5:28-30)*

Third, love is caring.

Paul writes in verses 28-30, **“In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.”** Husbands care for their own bodies, and they should care for their wives at least as much as they do for their own bodies.

Tony Merida says that he will never forget one particular example of this type of love. He writes:

Wayne Grudem, world-renowned theologian, was on faculty at Trinity University for 20 years. He served with scholars like D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo. They were the “Seal Team Six of Professors.” But his wife suffered from fibromyalgia, a disease that causes pain to many muscle groups and for which there is no known cure. She had a difficult time walking up stairs and doing household work. They had prayed and tried everything, but there was no relief. Her pain was aggravated by cold weather and humidity. Chicago was not the most ideal place for her to live.

Some friends invited the Grudems to Mesa, Arizona, for vacation, and they learned that the warm dry climate was wonderfully helpful. They made a few trips and even rode bikes together there for first time in 12 years. Dr. Grudem told his bride, “I would like to move here, but there are no seminaries.” A few days later they were flipping through the Yellow Pages and found Phoenix Seminary. Dr. Grudem called and asked if the school had any openings. The school

(Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 192.

was interested.

After much prayer and thought, Dr. Grudem began pondering the implications of Ephesians 5:28, that you should love your wife as you do your own body. He said, “If I were suffering like Margret, would I not want to move for the sake of my health?” The obvious answer was yes. But his bride did not want to move because she knew her husband had an influential role at a large, respected institution. So there they were. He wanted to move for her sake; she wanted to stay for his sake.

Finally, when Phoenix told him that they would give him a reduced teaching load with more time to write, Mrs. Grudem thought this was a wonderful incentive; the two began processing a possible move. Eventually she told her husband, “I’m going to trust you to make the decision.” In the end she followed the loving leadership of her husband, who made a great sacrifice in order to nourish and care for his bride (Grudem, “Upon Leaving”).

Husband, love your wife as your own body, even if it means sacrificing your career dreams. Nourish her. Cherish her.⁵

D. *Love Is Unbreakable (5:31)*

And finally, love is unbreakable.

Quoting Genesis 2:24, Paul writes in verse 31, **“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”** From the beginning of creation, God’s intention for covenant marriage was for one man and one woman to leave their parents’ homes and be joined together in a life-long marriage, thus becoming one flesh. Love in marriage is not primarily a feeling. Love in

⁵ Tony Merida, David Platt, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2014), n.p.

marriage is primarily a commitment to the other person. Mike Mason has written, “Marriages which are dependent on [romantic] love fall apart, or at best are in for a stormy time of it. But marriages which consistently look back to their vows, to those wild promises made before God, and which trust him to make sense out of them, find a continual source of strength and renewal.”⁶

So, how does a husband love his wife? He loves his wife with a love that is sacrificial, sanctifying, caring, and unbreakable.

III. The Model for Love (5:32-33)

Finally, let’s observe the model for love.

Paul writes in verses 32-33, **“This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”** Marriage is picture of Christ and the church. Christ is the model of how a husband is to love his wife. That is why the command for a husband to love his wife is so much more difficult than the command for a wife to submit to her husband. Christ, you see, loves his bride perfectly. And that is the standard to which God calls husbands.

The good news of the gospel is that Christ also paid the penalty by his death for those who could not keep God’s demands perfectly. And the further good news is that God gives his Spirit to empower husbands to love their wives well. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said of Christ’s love:

⁶ Mike Mason, *The Mystery of Marriage* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996), 95.

This love of Christ is the most amazing thing under Heaven, if not in Heaven itself. How often have I said to you that if I had heard that Christ pitied us, I could understand it. If I had heard that Christ had mercy upon us, I could comprehend it. But when it is written that he actually *loves* us, that is quite another and a much more extraordinary thing! Love between mortal and mortal is quite natural and comprehensible, but love between the Infinite God and us poor sinful finite creatures, though conceivable in one sense, is utterly inconceivable in another. Who can grasp such an idea? Who can fully understand it? Especially when it comes in this form—“HE” (read it in large capitals) “loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*”—this is the miracle of miracles!⁷

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed Ephesians 5:25-33, let husbands love their wives, as Christ loved the church.

Winston Churchill once attended a formal banquet in London at which the attending dignitaries were asked the question, “If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be?” Naturally everyone was curious as to what Winston Churchill, seated next to his beloved Clemmie, would say. When it finally came Churchill’s turn, the great 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.”⁸

May God help every Spirit-filled husband to love his wife, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Amen.

⁷ Tony Merida, David Platt, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, n.p.

⁸ James Humes, *Churchill, Speaker of the Century* (Briarcliff Manor, NY: Stein and Day/Scarborough House, 1980), 291.

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