

How a Faithful Husband Provides for His Wife

Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 5:25-29

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How many husbands, who profess to love their wives, have become unfaithful to their wives and have fallen into an adulterous affair (even ministers of the gospel). Having an affair may not have even been on their radar. "It may happen to other men, but not to me. I love my wife, and I would never be unfaithful to her." But it did happen. And it happened not usually with one great plunge, but usually by small incremental steps which were not recognized for what they were—unfaithfulness in the heart and affection; unfaithfulness with the eyes to feed the lusts of the flesh; unfaithfulness with the ears to listen to immoral lyrics in songs; unfaithfulness with the mouth to flirt or to tell sexual jokes and stories to friends; and unfaithfulness with the hands to defile oneself.

Unfaithfulness within the marriage begins with such steps, before it ever leads to a sexual relationship outside of marriage. And if you are not married, such steps of unfaithfulness are preparing you not to be faithful to your future spouse, but rather to be unfaithful to your future spouse. These acts of unfaithfulness have led many a person to a slippery slope and to an affair never intended and to sorrow that has broken the lives of ministers and members of the church alike.

Last Lord's Day, we considered the role of the faithful husband to be a loving leader within the marriage (Ephesians 5:23). His leadership comes neither from his physical strength to keep his wife in check, nor from his threats to frighten her into submission, but rather his leadership comes from the God who created man and woman and who instituted marriage. Thus, use of physical force and threats do not establish a man's lawful authority in the marriage. If anything, this only leads to disrespect for his authority.

Husbands, if we want to rid the words "submission" or "authority" of all the negative connotations as being dirty words, let us grow (by God's grace) in the fruit of faithfulness in our imitation of Christ as a loving leader. Let us pour out our hearts to the Lord that He would make us faithful leaders who willingly sacrifice ourselves for our wives that they may know (and really know) that we love them. Then I submit submission will cease to be a dirty word and will become a delight because our wives will know that we lead them for their good and not for our power trip.

This Lord's Day we shall see that the faithfulness of a husband in providing for his wife is revealed in two primary ways: (1) In Faithfully Providing for Her Spiritual Welfare (Ephesians 5:25-27); and (2) In Faithfully Providing for Her Physical Welfare (Ephesians 5:28-29).

I. The Faithfulness of a Husband is Revealed in Faithfully Providing for Her Spiritual Welfare (Ephesians 5:25-27).

A. Here in Ephesians 5:25-27, Paul draws attention to the fact that Christ is the SAVIOR and SANCTIFIER of His Bride, the Church. He did not save His Bride because she was attractive, holy, respectful, or pleasing to Him in any way. To the contrary we were ungodly, ugly due to our sin, disrespectful, and displeasing to Christ in every possible way. We were not saved because of anything good within us, but because of His undeserving love which was freely and abundantly showered upon us (as Paul explains in Romans 4:5; Romans 5:6,8,10).

B. Jesus Christ has purchased the Church unto Himself by laying down His life and suffering the wrath of God for her in order to pay the infinite punishment due to her for her sin (Ephesians 5:25). But He also continues the work He has begun by sanctifying her and gradually making her holy throughout her earthly pilgrimage until that time when He comes again and His Bride will be raised from the dead in perfection without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:26-27). Dear ones, we not only look in faith to Christ alone for our justification, but we are also to look in faith to Christ alone for our sanctification (Philippians 2:13). For you see, dear ones, the goal toward which our justification and sanctification are directed is nothing less than conformity to Jesus Christ.

C. How does Christ accomplish our sanctification? He changes us by the power of the Holy Spirit and grows us in the fruit of the Spirit. Christ washes and cleanses our sin, our disobedience, and our unfaithfulness by regeneration and by applying the promises of the Word of God to us.

1. So why then is our sanctification hindered at times? In part because we are not availing ourselves of His appointed means of grace: the word, sacraments, and prayer with believing hearts. We are either ignoring the means of grace, or we are disbelieving that Christ actually uses these means of grace to change us, or we are looking to the means of grace to change our hearts rather than looking in faith to Christ to change our lives through these means of grace (they are means not the source of grace).

2. Dear ones, be faithful in the right use of the Word, sacraments, and prayer and look in faith to Christ to give you the grace you need and the grace He has promised. This is why Christ has given to us these means of grace—for the strengthening of our faith in His promises that we may grow in our sanctification.

D. Paul has at this point brought before husbands the model of Christ to imitate not because husbands can actually save or sanctify their wives (for that is the work of God alone), but in order to leave for husbands a pattern to follow. For just as Christ so loved and cared for His Bride **spiritually** that He gave Himself for her salvation, in a SIMILAR manner (not the SAME manner), a husband is to love and to **spiritually** care for his bride that he might be used of the Lord as a God-appointed means to promote his wife's salvation and sanctification (as Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 7:16). Thus, Paul brings forth THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST so as to impress upon us, husbands, that loving and providing for our wives is first manifested in our **SPIRITUAL** care and nourishment of them. This is not simply a confession we utter with our mouths, but is a daily truth that we apply in our loving leadership. How is a faithful husband to spiritually care for and provide for his wife?

1. **A LOVING AND FAITHFUL HEAD OF THE HOME** spiritually provides for his wife by fervently praying for her. Men, how much time do we spend in praying for our wives? Perhaps we don't even know how to pray more specifically for our wives because we haven't spent enough time with them to know their struggles, their temptations, or their victories. We may be diligent to pray for the needs of others, but we ought to be especially diligent to pray for the needs of our wives, for we are more nearly and closely joined together with them than with anyone else upon the earth.

2. **A LOVING AND FAITHFUL HEAD OF THE HOME** spiritually provides for his wife by setting an example of Christ before her in the way he speaks and behaves to her. If our wives do not know that they are loved by us (as evidenced by the way we speak and behave to them), that we prize and treasure them (as evidenced by the way we speak and behave to them), and that we give honor to them as Peter states in 1 Peter 3:7 (as evidenced by the way we speak and behave to them), then how will our wives ever see Christ in us, men, and earnestly desire to follow us as we follow Christ? Men, we are to lead our wives to Christ, not chase them away from Christ by our poor example in the home.

3. **A LOVING AND FAITHFUL HEAD OF THE HOME** spiritually provides for his wife by taking time each day to read God's Word and to call out to God in prayer for his own need to be Christ-like within his

home, and especially to his wife. A faithful husband is a student in the School of Christ. A faithful husband recognizes his own desperate weaknesses and sins, and cries out to God to make of him a godly man (in his affections, in his speech, and in his conduct). How can he love his wife as he ought, if he is not growing in his love for Christ? How can he speak to his wife as he ought, how can he lead her as he ought, and how can he set a godly example before her as he ought apart from the power of God's Spirit actively working in his own life (through prayer and the Word of God)?

a. Men, our own haphazard approach to secret worship is indirectly a sin against our wives. For, husbands, we are not leading by our example, if we are shirking our duty in secret worship. Nor are we interested in truly serving our wives, if we do not spend time each day seeking the grace of God to do that which is impossible to man: to love and lead our wives as Christ loves and leads His Church.

b. Show me a man who takes his duty seriously to love and lead his wife as Christ loves and leads His Church, and I will show you a man who is spending time in the Word and in prayer each day, praying for the grace he needs to do so faithfully (not perfectly, but faithfully).

4. **A LOVING AND FAITHFUL HEAD OF THE HOME** spiritually provides for his wife by taking the time to humbly instruct his wife and answer her questions about the Word of God (which implies he must be growing in his knowledge of the Bible). He will be courageous in the truth and patient in explaining the truth. In so doing, a husband not only builds his wife up in the faith, but also protects and defends her from the enemies of her soul.

a. Husbands, our wives are our first and primary disciple on the earth. Above all others whom we may disciple for Christ, our wife is the most significant disciple we will ever have; for she is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

b. Thus, the necessary duty of the husband to lead his wife and children in daily family worship is essential. Fathers, if you love your children and care for the souls of your children, then love your wives and spend time caring for their souls.

5. **A LOVING AND FAITHFUL HEAD OF THE HOME** spiritually provides for his wife by encouraging his wife when she struggles with fears, with relationships, with discouragement, with physical problems. He will like Christ come alongside her to help her to stand when she feels like she is falling. He will not beat her down, but will rather lift her up.

a. Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." If that is true of a brother, how much more it should be true of a husband. Husbands, if we are to love our wives as Christ loved His Bride we must be willing to help them carry their burdens as Christ has carried ours.

b. A wife also needs to hear her husband's encouragement in those duties she is performing well within the home, so that she does not grow discouraged in her work. Do unto her as you would have her do unto you in helping to carry your burdens. Ultimately, only Christ can carry our burdens, but what a difference it makes in a home when a husband and wife are best friends and want to help and serve one another when the trials of life become so daunting (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

6. **A LOVING AND FAITHFUL HEAD OF THE HOME** spiritually provides for his wife by correcting his wife lovingly and gently for her well-being when necessary, and not out of anger or resentment. We must allow love to cover a multitude of sins, so that we do not find ourselves continually correcting our wives for simply minor irritations. However, when such correction is needed, it should ordinarily be done privately and not for the purpose of embarrassing and hurting the one loved. Correction should always be for the purpose of instructing the one loved, not embarrassing the one loved.

a. Respect for the husband's loving leadership will grow in a wife when she is not publicly humiliated, but is gently corrected away from the children and the crowd (Galatians 6:1). My fellow husbands, let us look to ourselves first and remove the beam from our own eye before trying to remove the speck from our wife's eye.

b. Men, if we do not take the time to build up our wives by encouraging them in that which they do well within the home, letting them hear how much we appreciate their service, your correction will usually come across as harsh and uncaring.

7. **A LOVING AND FAITHFUL HEAD OF THE HOME** spiritually provides for his wife by demonstrating his love for his wife by always seeking (and even initiating) reconciliation when division has occurred. He will humbly repent of his own sins and errors and seek the forgiveness of his wife when he has sinned against her, and he will joyfully forgive her when she has sinned and repents of her sin (this is simply living the gospel before your wife).

a. If we are to show a loving leadership in our homes, we must also lead in the grace of humility. We must learn to swallow our pride, and confess our sins. We must set the example even if our wife does not follow because that is how Christ leads us (He initiates love).

b. We must not allow the sun to set upon our wrath (Ephesians 4:26). Like Christ, we must ever have our arms extended to our wives in order to invite her back into that blessed communion and fellowship with us. There may be many other spiritual duties in faithfully providing for your wife, but here is a good start, husbands, in loving your wives as Christ loved the Church.

II. The Faithfulness of a Husband is Revealed in Faithfully Providing for Her Physical Welfare (Ephesians 5:28-29).

A. Not only is it the duty of faithfulness to spiritually care for and provide for our wives as Christ has spiritually cared for and provided for His Bride, the Church, but it is also the duty of faithfulness to physically care for and provide for our wives as we do for our own bodies. Whereas the model of Christ's love for the Church focuses primarily upon a husband's SPIRITUAL faithfulness to his wife, a husband's love for his own body focuses primarily upon a husband's PHYSICAL faithfulness to his wife.

B. In speaking of a man's love for his body, Paul is not addressing some sinful or selfish love, but rather a natural God-given love of self-preservation in caring for his body: a love to feed, clothe, shelter, and care for the body. Paul now is emphasizing to husbands that just as they care for their own bodies in providing for themselves all that is needful and profitable, so ought they to provide for their wives that which is needful and beneficial to their physical well-being. Why? Because the wife is one flesh with her husband. The husband is to view whatever he does to his wife as that which he does to himself (whether good or bad). How is a husband to faithfully provide physically for his wife?

1. Love for one's own body compels a husband TO PROVIDE FOR THE PHYSICAL NEEDS of his wife—such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention (1 Timothy 5:8). A wife shouldn't have to beg her husband for the proper clothing for herself if there is the means to provide it (the same goes for adequate housing, proper hygiene, food, and medical attention).

2. Love for one's own body compels a husband TO PHYSICALLY PROTECT his wife as the weaker vessel. Just as a husband is to spiritually protect his wife from enemies, so he is to physically protect her as well.

a. This physical protection may include not sending her out alone after dark or without a cell phone when it is unsafe.

b. This physical protection may include protecting her from the verbal attacks of others. A wife should have both confidence and comfort in knowing that her husband stands as a shield to defend her against the malicious words and actions of others. How common it is in some marriages for husbands to let down this shield and to allow their wives to be attacked by various family members. Such things ought not to be. But it will more likely be the case if the husband himself does not watch his own tongue and his own language toward his wife. If a husband embarrasses his wife in public or ridicules his wife

in public or attacks his wife in public, he ought not to be surprised if others do the same. If the person of your wife is to be protected, gentlemen, you must first protect her from your own unkind and malicious speech.

c. This physical protection will include protecting her from your own physical slaps, punches, threats, lying and deceiving. This is an abominable practice against nature and nature's God. God has stated through the Apostle Peter that because the wife is the weaker vessel, she is to be treated with more care and honor not less care and honor than you treat your boss or co-workers. How shameful it is, therefore, to take her who should be under our wing of protection and not only to expose her to outside attacks, but to inflict that pain upon her ourselves—the very one who has been appointed by God to be her protector. Does a man cherish his own body by abusing it? Of course not! Then how can he do so to his wife who is one flesh with him? Such is the action not of a loving leader, but that of a bully and an abuser. Such acts of violence should not only receive the just censure of the church, but ought also to receive the just censure of the civil magistrate.

3. Love for one's own body compels a husband TO BE FAITHFUL to his marriage covenant. He will evidence a sincere affection for his wife (and not just after the lights go off each night). He will seek to "know" his wife and not only in the intimate sense of that word. He will make a covenant with his eyes not to look with lust upon another woman (according to Job 31:1). He will not place himself in tempting situations (thinking he is above temptation or sin in the area of marital fidelity), but will avoid even the appearance of evil. He will not flirt with other females. He will not do things that will raise suspicion in the mind of his wife. He will flee youthful lusts. He will guard his mind (for that is where the battle of faithfulness is won). He will guard his eyes from pornography and immorality on the internet, in books, in magazines, or on television. Husbands, let your faithfulness be realized not only in the physical realm, but especially in the mental realm. Let us learn by God's grace to find full contentment with the wife to whom we are bound by covenant.

4. Husbands, if these duties of faithfulness to our wives do not reveal our inadequacies, I don't know what will. If these duties of faithfulness to our wives do not send us to Christ every day to be filled with His goodness, His resurrection power, His gentleness, His love, His holiness, and His faithfulness, I don't know what will. Husbands, we can either focus only upon the sins, weaknesses, and inadequacies of our wives and continue to know only a cold or hostile marriage; or we can focus upon our own need to be loving leaders and to faithfully provide for the spiritual needs and physical needs of our wives, and fervently call down the grace of God and the Spirit of God to change our lives first. Without Christ we can do nothing, but we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

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