

Motives for a biblically ordered family (Baxter):

- 1.) **It is an honor and glory to God.** An expression of true love for His requirements and Word.
- 2.) **It is a primary part of God's governing of the world.** It contributes to the well-being or misery of our culture. As goes the family, so goes the culture. We are being and raising citizens of our nation, for good or for ill. As such, it promotes either happiness or sorrow in this world.
- 3.) **It is a powerful means for the salvation of all the members.** It is either an incubator for worldliness and ungodliness or of holiness and worship. It can also establish godlessness.
- 4.) **It is a help to the church.** Families that are cultivated in God's word, trained to love worship and preaching and the people of God through hospitality, love for neighbor in the home make for healthy and blessed churches. Where its members neglect their family, live in worldliness and ungodliness, it corrupts the church and grieves the Holy Spirit.
- 5.) **It is a witness to the power of the Gospel of Christ.** The family is in crisis, and statistics preach to the world that Christians appear no different. We imbibe the false teachings and practices of our non-Christian (or at least unbiblical) upbringing, or else the common practices of the world instead of being transformed by the Word of God.
- 6.) **It is the place of special blessing in the presence of God.** As such, it is to be a place of happiness, where there is love, forgiveness, the pursuit of holiness, the worship of God, the resistance of the world, and the display of compassion to others. The home is either a foretaste of hell or a foretaste of heaven. It is either a torture-room or a safe-haven. It is a place in which, day after day, God's presence in community and loving relationships can be known.

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- We begin looking this week in more detail into the role and responsibilities of the husband. A summary statement of who he is under God is "**A loving and learning leader.**"
 - The essence of what he is, as you can see from this statement, is a leader (or head). I won't begin with that this week, as the text we will look at does not command him to lead. Rather, it simply states that he is one.
 - I would like to begin with the most emphasized command to the husband in the NT, particularly in relationship to his wife. It is a command to love.

I. THE COMMAND TO LOVE

- 1.) We are called to love one another **as believers** (1Pet1:22)
- 2.) To love God and to **love neighbor** (Mt22:35-40)
- 3.) We are called to love **our enemies** (Mt5:44)
- 4.) But added to all of these is a specific command for a husband to love **his wife** (Eph5:25 Col3:19)
 - So while there is a general call to call Christians, it is essential for a man functioning in the role of a husband
 - If a man cannot learn to love in these other relationships, it is doubtful that he will ever biblically love a woman
 - Notice that this love is targeted especially to a man's own wife. There is a love there that is superior to other loves. A wife should never have a rival love in their life, including mother-in-law, daughter, or another woman.

II. THE PATTERNS OF LOVE

- (Gk. kathos) "just as"

A. The Love of Christ for the Church – vv.25-27**1. The Essence of Christ's Love**

- "Gave Himself" - What was given was Himself; not primarily stuff, things, or objects; the greatest gift the Lord Jesus has given is Himself, and all the other things are secondary. This is also true for the husband. The other things may be tokens of his love for his wife, but they are nothing if he does not give himself.

2. The Object of Christ's Love

- "For her" - that love is a dedicated and monogamous love; the construction is specific, as He does not have many brides, but one (which is comprised of all the redeemed). For the wife, she should not be made to feel that there are other women, whether mother-in-law, daughter, sister, or another woman (including in the workplace), a previous spouse (living or dead) who the man is more loves more than her.

3. The Goal of Christ's Love (vv.26-27)

- "To sanctify and cleanse her...to present her..." Jesus' primary purpose was to see her made holy, a vessel to offer to God as well pleasing to Him. This is the goal of all true love. This is especially the goal of a husband. The primary goal isn't to "get", but to be a helper of this woman in being godly.
- It is an atrocity when, through a man's selfishness and neglect a woman is the worse for being with him. Many a young woman raised in a Christian home who looked forward to having a husband who would lead her in godliness instead was made the worse by his bad example, neglect, and self-centeredness.
- "By the Word" – The primary means is the Word of God, not only in the bride of Christ's sanctification, but also the bride of a Christian man. He brings the influence of the Word into her life, teaches her, guides her, reads with her, explains it to her. Without the Word the husband doesn't have what is necessary to bring this about. In many marriages, it is the wife who is trying to wash her husband with the Word and he is resistant.

He is the one who should be, like Christ, taking up the basin and the towel and serving her as the family "prophet."

B. The Love of a Man for His Own Body – vv.28-33a

- "Ought" (Gk. *opheilo*) = are bound or obligated; moral necessity.
- As their own bodies = the presupposition here is that a man loves his own body. This isn't the self-esteem/self love of modern trends where one feels good about themselves regardless of what they have done. The specific object of this love is their body, or their flesh. This means that he cares for it, seeks to protect it, nourishes it, remove what is harmful, keep it healthy.
- Paul writes "**no one ever hated his own flesh.**" Yet, this is not always the case. There are those who don't have this disposition toward their own body. What they put on it, into it, or do with it doesn't matter to them. They abuse it, mistreat it, neglect it, but bad health habits, sleeping habits, and recklessness. But if we think about it, even this is a kind of twisted fulfillment of this passage. Why does one do these (bad) things? Because it feels good to their flesh? Self-denial, discipline in exercise and sleep, being responsible in what we do all (thought ultimately good) don't "feel" good to the flesh. So while not doing what is ultimately good, they are doing what feels temporarily good. Even those who do such things as mutilation are doing it for one of two major reasons. To feel again (b/c of emotional numbness) or to feel the relief of released tension.
- Here Paul draws in the most commonly repeated phrase used to describe the marriage relationship: "**one flesh**" (Gen2:24 Mt19:5-6 Mk10:8 1Cor6:16 Eph. 5:31ff). Through the means of covenant relationship and sexual union, two people are psychologically and physically bonded together. His argument is that, because of this oneness, a man who loves his wife is ultimately acting loving toward himself. It is a madman who hates and seeks to destroy himself.
- The modern notion is that marriage is but a social contract, to be ratified or broken at whim. But God's declaration is that it is something more permanent, and something that can't be broken without severe damage.
- There are two things which a (sane) man does to his own body, which is also to be paralleled in the husband/wife relationship.
- Nourish (Gk. *ektrepho* = provide food for or to bring up children by providing for psychological and physical needs, or teach/train. Cherish (Gk. *thalpo*) = take care of with concern, impart warmth, comfort, tenderly care for.
- What we see is much more than a one-sided, "my wife care for me" mentality. Rather, the husband is proactively and carefully helping his wife to mature in all her ways as a human being. We also see a tenderness in this, not the "if you want to cry, go talk to your mother or girlfriend." He is there caring and loving.
- Paul goes on to draw out the analogy, and (v.30) speaks of how we are members of Christ, and His body. This is what Jesus does for His body, this is what a man does for his own body, this is what a husband is to do for his wife. At this point I could ask the godly women in our midst whether they would have difficulty submitting to such a man?
- He then explicitly quotes the Genesis passage (v.31) and how this is the great mystery (v.32). As we saw last week, the relationship of a man to his wife is to be a portrait of Christ's love to the church. But this isn't all he is talking about ("nevertheless" v.33 ...don't just get caught up in the theology of it, but the practical)

III. THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE

- What is love? Not first and foremost a feeling, but a commitment to sacrificial giving (Eph5:25 Jn3:16)
 - Giving includes self-denial, looking at the wife's needs and desires (that are right) and denying one's own comfort and "rights" to minister to her. It is a Christ-like love that we are to pursue, not as defined by Hallmark cards, Hollywood movies, or Harlequin novels
 - What is required is not **immediate duplication, but progressive imitation**. Don't try to discount your immediate responsibility by claims of an impossible standard. It is what God commands, and if we are Christian man we have been given what is necessary to begin to imitate Christ.
- 1.) **Jesus love makes Him "on the side" of His people** - making intercession (Heb7:25). A husband is to pray for his wife, to intercede, to ask God's mercy for her. How do we want Jesus to respond to our failures, then we do toward them. When we begin to think that we are working against our wife, then we have become divided.
 - 2.) **Jesus initiates and pursues that love** - the man is to be the Initiator of this love as a reflection of the image of God – 1Jn4:19. It is a love that is committed, with great sacrifice, to the good of the other. Christ loves us even when we were unlovable, and when we fall short. Even when she is unlovable, and essential to being able to do this is the cultivation of our own sense of God's love toward us, undeserved, sometimes despised.
 - 3.) **Jesus' love is always greater than ours**. So when a man loves, it is for the sake of the good of the object. When there is return, it is beneficial and appreciated. But there should not be the condition that when she loves up to where I have, then I will increase it. If she doesn't then I will decrease. There is the temptation, when a man does not feel loved in return, to be bitter – Col3:19.
 - 4.) **It is the love of 1Corinthians 13**

- The marriage vow usually says “I promise to love...until death parts us.” This is the essence of covenant, the oath bound promise. It is with the ultimate end in view, and the confidence that God will complete that work in her. Until then, like Christ, we self-sacrificially give and love.
- When a man says “I just don’t love her”, it is not ultimately the lack of affection, but an admission of moral failure. I am not loving her as Christ loves the church. At the point, the godly man cries out for help as to how to do so.

APPLICATION

- To all – bask in Christ’s marvelous love for the church.
- To single women – in looking for a spouse, I urge you to look for a man who understands something of the love of Christ. He cannot imitate what he doesn’t know. Look for a man who knows how to love others, and is not selfish, self-centered, and self-absorbed.
- To single men – if you should hope to be married, you can be practicing these qualities now. The essential call is as a Christian, especially to the church of Jesus Christ. You can demonstrate that love now more greatly than you will be able to when you are married.
- To wives – Where that love is lacking, if you are a Christian woman you have a Savior who loves you perfectly in this way. Pray that your husband will grow to know the love of Christ, and demonstrate that love to him as your closest neighbor.
- Parents – What habits and lifestyle are you instilling in your sons? Are you demonstrating what this looks like? We live in a culture where they will not see this!
- To husbands – we have an incredible calling, and one designed to reflect the Savior like no other human relationship; it is a big calling. Where convicted, go to the cross and find forgiveness; it isn’t too late to learn, and seek by God’s grace to change;