

The Christian Home (12): Husbandry Duties (part 2)

Having considered the nature of love that husbands ought to have for their wives last week, we come this morning to its pattern and motives.

I. Husbandry Love

1. *Its pattern.* "The pattern of a husband's love is *twofold*. Not only is He to love His wife as Christ loves the church, but He is to love His wife as He loves Himself" (Beeke).¹ (1) Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph.5:25). "All the duties of a husband are included under this one word, love. In order that a husband might be better directed, and that he might be more provoked, the example of Christ and of His love to the church, is set forth very strongly" (Gouge).² William Gouge provided two reasons why Christ's love for His church is the pattern for husbands: first, "because they can never love so much as Christ did, they must never think they have loved enough"; second, "though their love in measure cannot equal Christ's love, yet in manner, it must be like Christ's, an initiating, true, free, pure, exceeding, and constant love."³

(a) Sacrificially. "*Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends* (Jn.15:13). This Christ did for His church. He spared no expense to purchase her, but paid the greatest possible price—His own life. Therefore, a husband must love his wife sacrificially, sparing no cost to himself in order to do her good. He is to lay down his life for her, preferring her to himself, putting her interests before his own, working for her good" (Beeke).⁴ "The husband has been called to love his wife sacrificially, being willing to die to his own desires, that he may be diligent to meet and satisfy hers" (Hartman).⁵

(b) Undeservedly. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom.5:8). "A Christian husband must chisel in stone a clear understanding that his love for his wife is never contingent on her loveliness or lovability. He is commanded to love her as Christ loved the church, even when she is at the extreme of being rebellious and unattractive" (Hartman).⁶

In imitation of Christ husbands should love their wives, even if there is nothing in wives to move them so to do, but only because they are their wives, even though no future benefit could after be expected from them. True love gives its attention to the person which is loved, and the good love may do to her, rather than to the person who loves, and the good that he may receive. *For love seeks not her own* (1Cor.13:5).⁷

(c) Continuously. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Eph.5:25-27). "According to verse 27, Christ loves the church enduringly, that is, through all her struggles and setbacks, until He presents her to the Father as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle. His love will be fully realized in her fi-

¹ Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 180

² William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 1:50-51

³ William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 1:51

⁴ Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 178

⁵ Edward Hartman, *Homeward Bound*, 47

⁶ Edward Hartman, *Homeward Bound*, 47

⁷ William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 2:260

nal perfection, and so it never fails" (Beeke).⁸ "The duration of Christ's love was without end, 'Having loved his own...He loved them unto the end' (Jn.13:1). His love was constant, and eternal (Hos.2:19), never regretting it, never changing or altering His mind" (Gouge).⁹ "Christ's love is a constant love, an everlasting love. No provocations or transgressions could ever make Him forget His love (Jer.3:1). Such must be the love of husbands. It must be a firm and unbreakable love. The ground of it must be God's ordinance, and the support of it must be a firm resolution, that no provocation shall ever change or alter it" (Ambrose).¹⁰

If a husband is to follow the example of Christ, he must love his wife consistently and unalterably through all her struggles and failures. His love must be a love which flows every day the same, not fervently today and coldly tomorrow, freely today and meagerly tomorrow, or cheerfully today and begrudgingly tomorrow. His love must be a love which no provocation can alter and which bears all her infirmities with patience, understanding, and sympathy, endeavoring in love first to overcome evil with good and then to correct what he can and accept what he cannot.¹¹

Men ought to love their wives, not only at the beginning, but to the end of their union; when the charms of beauty have fled before the withering influence of disease; when the vigorous and sprightly frame has lost its elasticity, and the step has become slow and faltering: when the wrinkles of age have succeeded to the bloom of youth, and the whole person seems rather the monument, than the resemblance of what it once was.¹²

(d) Beneficially. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word" (Eph.5:25-26). "Christ's sacrifice of Himself was not only to save us *from* the eternal penalty of our sin, but also to save us *to* the holiness which He perfectly represents and embodies. His design is to continually change us and perfect within us His own likeness" (Hartman).¹³ "When a man loves someone, that person's purity is his supreme concern. No one loves and wants to defile the one he loves. Christ loved His church, so He wanted to purify His people" (MacArthur).¹⁴ "Now that which Christ aimed at was to sanctify and cleanse His people from sin, which does not only set forth the value of holiness, but does teach husbands how to express their love to their wives, in being helps to them in the best things (i.e., spiritual things)" (Manton).¹⁵

Lou Priolo, in a chapter entitled "*Honey, You Need a Bath*," provided 19 ways a husband can "wash his wife with the word (I will mention ten)."¹⁶ First, "be sure she has enough time in her daily schedule for personal Bible study and prayer"; second, "spend time with her regularly (aim for at least once a week) in Bible study"; third, "encourage her to ask you for help in answering any questions she may have about Bible doctrine or application"; fourth, "ask her to memorize a portion of Scripture together with you and propose that you hold each other accountable"; fifth, "be alert for even the smallest indications of spiritual growth and maturity in her, and praise her for them"; sixth, "encourage her to be faithful in attending all the meetings of the church (and set a good example by faithfully attending yourself)"; seventh, "encourage other opportunities she may have to study the Scriptures (individ-

⁸ Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 179

⁹ William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 2:264

¹⁰ Isaac Ambrose, *The Well-Order Family*, 23

¹¹ Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 180

¹² John Angell James, *A Help to Domestic Happiness*, 49-50

¹³ Edward Hartman, *Homeward Bound*, 47

¹⁴ John MacArthur, *The Family*, 66

¹⁵ Thomas Manton, *Works*, 19:471

¹⁶ Lou Priolo, *The Complete Husband*, 182-184

ually or with others)"; eighth, "provide scripturally based music for her to enjoy when at home or in the car"; ninth, "if your wife enjoys reading, invest in biblically sound Christian books (and biographies)"; tenth, "be a good example (a model) of a growing Christian yourself."

(e) Manifestly. "Christ manifests His love in words and deeds. He tells us He loves us. He shows us He loves us. He protects us, prays for us, guards us, strengthens us, helps us, defends us, teaches us, comforts us, chastens us, equips us, empathizes with us, and provides for all our needs" (Mack).¹⁷ Thus, husbands must manifest their love through tangible (verbal and physical) expressions of love. Love is evident and apparent.

(f) Freely. Christ's love for the church is free and willing. "In other words, His love sought nothing from her, preceded hers, and sought only to give to her the fruits of His free love. Therefore a husband is to love his wife freely. His love is to be set upon her simply because she is his wife. He is not to love her for what she gives him or does for him, but rather because he has promised to love her" (Beeke).¹⁸

The benefit which Christ reaps from the church is in one word *nothing*, for Christ is in Himself all-sufficient. He neither needs anything, nor can receive anything. Yet abundantly He gives all kinds of gifts: temporal and spiritual, earthly and heavenly. It was not therefore His own good that He considered in loving the church, but her good, for He being God became man (1Tim.3:16). To apply this point, and to bring it to the conclusion, if Christ who can receive nothing from the church still loves her, should not men much more love their wives, who in many ways receive much good from them, and without whom they cannot be well.¹⁹

(2) Husbands are to love their wives as they love themselves. "So husbands ought to love their own 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 the Lord does the church" (Eph.5:28-29). As grasping Christ's love for us is difficult, Paul provides a second pattern that's closer to home. "He that does not know with what manner of love Christ does love His church, yet knows with what love he loves himself" (Steele).²⁰

Question: Is not the former pattern sufficient (Christ's example)? *Answer:* Christ's example is a full, complete, perfect, and all sufficient pattern, far more excellent than of a man's self-love. This is not attached to add anything to that, but only because of our slowness, to make the point somewhat more plain and clear. For this pattern is more tangible and more easily discerned. Everyone knows how he loves his own body, but few or none know how Christ loves His church.²¹

"Two things are to be gathered from this pattern by the husband for his imitation: tenderness and cheerfulness" (Beeke).²² (a) Tenderness. "No one can touch or handle a man's sores and griefs so tenderly as himself. Such ought the husband's love to be toward his wife, accompanied with the greatest tenderness. For they are like crystal glasses, soon broken if not tenderly handled" (Steele).²³ (b) Cheerfulness. "No man is so ready to help a man as himself. His best friends sometimes falter and are

¹⁷ Wayne Mack, *Strengthening your Marriage*, 41

¹⁸ Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 179

¹⁹ William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 2:270-271

²⁰ Richard Steele, *A Theology of the Family*, 239

²¹ William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 2:265-266

²² Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 181

²³ Richard Steele, *A Theology of the Family*, 239

weary at length; but every man helps himself. Let the business be never so hard or hazardous, a man will venture when it is for himself. So must the husband most readily and cheerfully assist, comfort, and help his wife" (Steele).²⁴

2. *Its motives.* Joel Beeke provided five reasons (motives) husbands ought to love their wives. (1) God requires it. "Colossians 3:19 says, 'Husbands, love your wives,' and this command is repeated no less than three times in Ephesians 5 (vv25, 28, 33). When all else fluctuates, this remains the same; when all else fails, this remains sure; when all else is shaken, this remains intact. If his wife is not congenial, he still must love her; if he does not feel like it, he still must love her; if she hurts and wrongs him, he still must love her" (Beeke).²⁵ (2) Your vow requires it. "If God's command binds him from above, his marital vows bind him from below. His marriage to his wife is a covenant before God (Mal.2:4) in which he has promised to love and cherish her; not because of anything in her but because she is his wife, for love is far more than a warm feeling. It is a commitment carried out daily with heart and hand, in word and deed" (Beeke).²⁶

(3) Her nearness requires it. "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph.5:28). "There is none so near to a husband as his wife and therefore there is none who has as much right to his love—or the right to as much of his love—as she does" (Beeke).²⁷ "Husbands must love their wives because of all persons on earth a wife is the most proper object of love. Neither friend, nor child, nor parent ought to be so loved as a wife. She is termed, 'the wife of your bosom' (Deut.13:6), to show that she ought to be as his heart in his bosom" (Gouge).²⁸

(4) Your comfort requires it. "It is love, which ought at first to tie the marriage-knot: and it is love alone, that can afterwards make it easy. No other respect whatsoever can keep it from wringing (soaking) and galling (irritating) us. And, although lack of love cannot dissolve the bond, yet it does the joy and comfort of a married state" (Hopkins).²⁹ "The interest and comfort of the married estate will encourage love. While love is kept up, all things go on sweetly; but as soon as love fails, presently everything is out of order and out of joint" (Manton).³⁰

(5) Your other duties require it. "Every other duty must flow out of love, or they cannot be done well (1Cor.16:14). His wife should see and feel his love in all he does" (Beeke).³¹

The affection of love is a distinct duty in itself, especially belonging to a husband, and also a common condition which must be joined to every other duty of a husband, to season and sweeten them. His look, his speech, his conduct, and all his actions, in which he has to do with his wife, must be seasoned with love. Love must show itself in his commandments, in his reproofs, in his instructions, in his admonitions, in his authority, when they are alone together, when they are in company before others, in civil affairs, in religious matters, at all times, in all things. As salt must be first and last upon the table, and eaten with every bit of meat, so must love be first in a husband's

²⁴ Richard Steele, *A Theology of the Family*, 239

²⁵ Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 176

²⁶ Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 176

²⁷ Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 176

²⁸ William Gouge, *Building a Godly Marriage*, 2:181

²⁹ Ezekiel Hopkins, *Works*, 1:414

³⁰ Thomas Manton, *Works*, 19:475

³¹ Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 177

heart, and last out of it, and mixed with everything in which he has to do with his wife.

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³² William Gouge, *Building a Godly Marriage*, 2:182-183