

We come this week in our short series entitled Pressing Questions, to our third question, Are you a loving husband—a question of course, limited to those who are husbands—Christianity, is concerned with every area of life—not merely with church life, but also and equally with home life (Am I a loving husband, a submissive wife, obedient child, faithful parent)...

Now—the first two questions (Am I true and growing Christian), intimately relates to the following questions—or put another way, the only the way to become a better husband, wife, parent, child, or sibling, is to become growing, maturing, and healthy Christians (you become a better husband by becoming a better Christian)...

I can show you this by reminding you, that before Paul tells wives to be submissive, husbands loving, children obedient, and fathers faithful, he spends the first half of the letter telling them who and what they are in Christ—Ephesian 5, has 4 chapters before it—what often happens is, it's taken out of its broader context within the letter. and thus well meaning Christians begin with, Wives submit to your husbands and Husbands love your wives—but this is NOT where Paul begins...

There is no way I can overstate this point—it is absolutely essential—the only way we can become better husbands, wives, parents, and children, is that we become better Christians—but the problem often is, people want to become better husbands and wives, without becoming better Christians—but you will never be a better husband or wife, then you are a Christian...

Everyone wants a happy marriage, but few people want to be healthy Christians—and it's for this reason we live in an era where marriage seminars, marriage books, and marriage counselling are multiplied, but no one's marriage is any better (my friends, we must be careful to never separate practice from doctrine, obedience from Christ...

I. Seven Ways Christ Loves the Church (and thus, seven ways husbands must love their wives)

Husbands are to love their wives in a similar way Christ loved and loves the church—though they can never love their wives in the same degree He loves the church, we are to love them in a similar way—Christ's love for His church is both the motive and pattern of our love to our wives—it motivates us to love them and it shows us how...

A. Personally

1. V25—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and have Himself for her"—by church is meant the elect...
2. Now—brethren, historical Protestant doctrine, has always maintained that Christ has a real love for all men...
3. But—historical Protestant doctrine has also maintains, that Christ has a special and unique love for His bride...
4. "Christ loved the church"—Christ loved the church in a unique way—He loved the church with a particular love...
5. Christ had (and has) a love for His Bride, that He does not have for others—He loves His Bride with a special love...
6. Furthermore, this elect can be viewed corporately (as a people), or else individually—that is, as single people...
7. Does Christ love the entire church—YES, and He loves them equally—but remember, He also loves them personally...
8. Gal.2:20—"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me..."
9. So too, husbands must love their own wives personally—they must love them above all other people on earth...
10. Perhaps I can put this another way—above and before any other ministry, husbands must care for their wives...

11. Now—I trust this is obvious—husbands are commanded to love their own wives in a unique and special way...
12. 1Pet.3:7—"Husbands dwell with your wives with knowledge"—that is—knowledgeable of them personally...
13. For example—I was thinking about this point the other day when I was barbequing—almost every back yard had a grill...
14. But—each grill was different—and ordinarily, it was the men who grilled—each man had to know his own grill...
15. Brethren—I know my grill well, I've had it know for 7 or 8 yrs—I know how to cook all kinds of meat on it...
16. But—I don't know my neighbors grill—because it's not my grill—he knows his grill, and I know my own grill...
17. Well this is similar with regards to wives—each husband has his own wife—and he must know her personally...
18. What an absolute tragedy, that many men, professing Christians, know their grill more than they know their wives...
19. Christ knows every sheep by name, and He knows every single thing about them personally and individually...
20. Husbands, if we are to love our wives as Christ loves the church, then we must love them personally and individually...
21. Lou Priolo (*The complete Husband*)—"Not all women are alike. While your wife, no doubt, has certain feminine characteristics which are consistent with others of her sex, she also has many more distinctive characteristics which make her a unique individual. You must learn about her needs, her wants, her interests, her goals, her dreams, her joys, her sorrows, her fears, her problems, her though processes, her desires, her feelings, her spiritual gifts and her temptations to sin..."
22. Let me suggest one simple but effective way to love your wife personally—have meaningful and regular conversations with her...
23. [1] Her soul—that is—speak about religious and spiritual things—talk about what you're hearing and reading...
24. That is—talk about the sermons that you're hearing, and talk about the Scripture that you're reading (together or separately)...
25. Furthermore—talk about her spiritual struggles, fears, and victories—get to know her spiritual condition and state...
26. And, talk to her about your own spiritual struggles, fears, and victories—remember, communication is two-way...
27. Dear brethren, what a wonderful way to get to know your wife—read a good religious or theological book together...
28. Yea, you can read a book on marriage (there some good ones)—but why not read a book about Christ and the gospel...
29. [2] Her day—most wives spend the majority of the day at home—cooking, cleaning, and caring for children (if there are children)...
30. [3] Her family—by this I mean here extended family—her parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunts...

B. Graciously

1. V25—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her"—here I'm thinking of the phrase "Christ loved the church"...
2. As I've said, by "church" is meant "the elect"—those given to Him by the Father, before the foundation of the world...
3. Now—let me ask you this—in what condition was the church in, when the Father elected it and gave it to His Son...
4. Well—again historical Protestant theology generally maintains, the Father chose the elect out from fallen humanity...

5. That is—when the Father gave the elect to Christ, He gave Him a bride that was guilty and filthy because of sin...
6. This is also seen in v26—"that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word..."
7. By "sanctify" refers to the removal of filth and by "cleanse" is meant the removal of the guilt of sin (justification)...
8. That is—Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for her, even though she was far from deserving His love...
9. We could say—He loved her when she was VERY unlovely—He loved her when she had NO love for Him...
10. Dear brethren—Christ didn't die for good people—He died for bad people—He died for morally ugly people...
11. Thus—we could describe Christ's love as initiating—He loved us before we loved Him—His love is gracious...
12. William Gouge—"Christ did not choose to love the church because there was something attractive in her that caught his eye; quite the contrary – His love arose exclusively and entirely from within Himself. There was nothing within her which she possessed beforehand that moved Him to love her – not beauty, not goodness, not wealth – nothing! Neither was there anything in her that He wanted or needed. He had no hope of her giving back to Him anything except that which He first gave her..."
13. William Gouge—"In the same way, husbands should love their wives. Although there is nothing in a wife that would move him to love her, except that she is his wife; although he expects no future benefit from her, he should give his love to her..."
14. [1] The love of husbands is unmerited love—husbands must love their wives, regardless of their character...
15. As a result—Paul doesn't say—"husbands love your wives, if they are worthy, deserving, or merit your love..."
16. Husbands are not to primarily love their wives because they find something within them that's lovable or lovely...
17. But—we are to love them regardless of those things—simply because Christ loved us when VERY unlovable...
18. [2] The love of husbands is initiating love—that is—it must go before our wives—it must be beginning love...
19. The older writers—spoke of Christ's preventing love and grace—that His love prevented (came before) our love for Him...
20. Thus—the love of Christ toward His bride was underserved—it was initiating—it wasn't deserved or earned...
21. 1Jn.4:19—"We love Him because He first loved us"—His love went before ours—it prevented our love for Him...
22. For example, let's say you have a subtle controversy with your wife, and both of you have said mean things...
23. What do you do—well, because you want to imitate Christ's love, you don't wait for her to apologize, but you initiate it...

C. Sacrificially

1. V25—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her"—love is selfless...
2. This of course is the highest expression of love—to give oneself for another—to lay down your life for another...
3. Christ loved His bride by dying the death she deserved—He gave Himself for her—He bore God's wrath in her place...
4. This phrase describes what's historically referred to as—substitutionary atonement—that is—He died for us...
5. The love of Christ cost Him—He came from heaven, was mistreated by men, and justly punished by God...

6. Wayne Mack—"He loved us and gave himself for us. He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. In love, He endured the horrible death of the cross with all of its physical and spiritual torture and agony. In love, He bore the guilt and penalty of sin and wrath of God in the place of His people. In love, He personally bore our sins in His own body on the cross so that the penalty and power and devastating effects of sin in our lives might be broken..."
7. And so—husbands must love their wives sacrificially and selflessly, just as Christ loved His own bride (church)...
8. And yes, husbands should be willing to die for their wives if necessary—but brethren, how often does this happen...
9. It's easier to say, I'll give my life for my wife, than to die daily to your self—we must give ourselves daily for our wives..
10. Now—it's rather easy to assert—Husbands must love their wives sacrificially, but what exactly does this entail...
11. [1] Put her NEEDS before your own—that is—a loving husband thinks of his wife, before he thinks of himself...
12. In short—a husband must serve his wife—he must take the place of a servant, making her needs most important...
13. Isn't this what our Savior did—"The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many..."
14. Is the husband a leader—Yes—does He have authority over the wife—Yes—but, like Christ, he must be a servant leader...
15. [2] Put her DESIRES before your own—that is—a loving husband puts the desires and preferences of his wife before his own...
16. For example—husbands may not be that interested in that the wife is—but he needs to become interested FOR HER...
17. He may not enjoy doing certain things—but he knows she does—thus he becomes interested in them—for her...
18. He may prefer to do others things—but he gives them up or does them less often—for no other reason but—for her...
19. He's willing to give of his free time—to be with her—and enjoy those things that she truly enjoys—for her...
20. 1Cor.7:33—"But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife" 1Cor.13:5—"Love does not seek its own..."

D. Openly

1. V25—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her"—Christ shows His love publically and personally...
2. [1] Publically—Christ showed His love for His bride, by publically bearing their sin on the cross, for all to see...
3. Jn.19:19-20—"Now Pilate wrote a title and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, *and* Latin..."
4. He was put to death outside a busy city, during a busy season—in order that sinners can forever behold His love...
5. In addition—He had written above Him who He was—in every major language—that all nations would know...
6. [2] Tangibly—by this I mean, Christ actually reveals His love to His people, through the word and by the Spirit...
7. He isn't content with merely making His love known in His historical work—but He effectually applies it in time...
8. We could say—He makes us know His love—He makes His love manifest and evident on a personal level...

9. Wayne Mack—"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, sympathizes with us, and provides for all our needs..."
10. Thus—husbands must make their love manifest—they have to make their love evident, obvious and known...
11. [3] Verbally—by this I mean, husbands need to tell their wives they love them—they must love them verbally...
12. Now—let me ask you a question—Does Christ make His love known to His bride verbally—yes, it's called Scripture...
13. My friends, the Scriptures are one important way that Christ openly shows love to His bride—He does so with words...
14. So too, husbands must verbally communicate love to their wives—they must show their love by their words...

E. Purposefully

1. V25—"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..."
2. I pointed out—that the words "sanctify" and "cleanse" refers to Christ—washing us from the pollution of sin...
3. How He cleanses her is the stated—"with the washing of water by the word"—through the regenerating work of the Spirit, by and through the gospel...
4. Christ's love has a redemptive focus—it has a primary purpose—above all else—it finds expression in salvation...
5. This doesn't deny His love is seen in providing for physical needs, but, it finds it's fullest expression in meeting spiritual needs...
6. But—notice Paul then says, v28—"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies"—in other words—they are to love them in a similar way Christ loves the church...
7. Thus—though our love concerns the whole person—it must have at it's ultimate purpose, our wives sanctification...
8. In fact I would go further—do we really and rightly love our wives, if we only care for their bodies and not souls...
9. Does Christ merely provide for our bodies and not souls—remember, love selflessly gives for the good of others...
10. J.R. Miller—"Some husbands love their wives very sincerely, and make many sacrifices for their sake. They carefully shelter them from life's rude blasts. They bless them with all tenderness and affectionateness...They do everything that love can suggest to make their earthly happiness full and complete. They share every burden and walk close beside them in every way of trial. But when they come to the matter of personal religion they draw back and leave them to go alone...Surely it is a great wrong to a woman, tender and dependent, to leave her to walk alone through this world in her deepest life, receiving no sympathy, no companionship, no support, from him who is her dearest friend. She must leave him outside of the most sacred part of her life. She must be silent to him concerning the experiences of her soul in its spiritual struggles, aspirations, yearnings, hopes..."
11. He continues—"It cannot be right that a husband should leave his wife to live such a large part of her life without his companionship and sympathy. His love should seek to enter with her into every sacred experience. In no other way could he give her such joy as by taking his place beside her as a fellow-heir of the same grace..."
12. [1] Pray for your wife—pray that God would give her grace, strength, joy, and contentment as she keeps the home...
13. [2] Instruct your wife—that is—discuss what she's hearing and reading, to ensure that she's benefiting from it...
14. [3] Protect your wife—that is—protect her from any thing or one, who would not be a positive influence on her...

F. Tenderly

1. V28—"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..."
2. Here the apostle continues the comparison between Christ and the church, and husbands and wives—both are one...
3. Christ is one with His bride—they are joined together in union—He's in them (Spirit), and they in Him (by faith)...
4. And thus—Christ and the church are joined together in the closest possible way—they are one, they are untied...
5. And the same is true of husbands and wives—they have been joined together through marriage and are one flesh...
6. V28—"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..."
7. [a] By nature, we all nourish and cherish our own bodies, and [b] Christ nourishes and cherishes His church...
8. Thus—here is my point—just as we natively nourish and cherish our bodies, and Christ nourishes and cherishes His body (the church), husbands are to nourish and cherish their wives...
9. [1] Treat her with tenderness—that is—treat as something valuable, as a treasure, as a fragile and priceless vase...
10. You know brethren, there are fewer things that warm my heart, then to watch an older couple interact together...
11. A couple that's been married for many decades, and especially to watch the husband show tenderness to his wife...
12. 1Pet.3:7—"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered..."
13. [a] There are differences—"giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel"—that is—women are physically weaker...
14. This is how I generally understand the phrase "weaker vessel"—but I do think it goes beyond merely physical...
15. There is a tenderness native to women, that's unique—a gentleness and sensitivity, that's not native to man...
16. This is why a man is wired to protect her—it's natural that men feel a sense of obligation to protect their wives...
17. Brethren—we live in a day when many woman, no longer want to be treated as women, but as men instead...
18. [b] There is equality—"giving honor to the wife...as being heirs together of the grace of life"—absolute equality...
19. [2] Speak to her with tenderness—that is—speak to her with affection, kindness, gentleness, warmth, and compassion...
20. Fewer things are more enjoyable, then to hear a husband speak sweetly to his wife—treating her with tenderness...
21. J.R. Miller—"There are men who would not willingly tread upon a crawling insect or a worm, who would not injure a dumb animal nor needlessly hurt any of the lowest of God's creatures, who every day bring many a pang to the heart of the tender, faithful, loving wife of their bosom by their sharp words or their impatient looks or acts..."

G. Continually

1. V27—"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..."
2. Christ love wasn't merely seen in His dying for His church (v25), in saving them (v26), but in glorifying them (v27)...

3. Jn.13:1—"Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end..."
4. [a] He previously loved them—"having loved His own who were in the world"—this refers to the disciples...
5. John is simply affirming—that Christ made known His love to His disciples throughout His earthly ministry...
6. Barnes—"This was done by his calling them to follow him; by patiently teaching them; by bearing with their errors and weaknesses; and by making them the heralds of his truth and the heirs of eternal life..."
7. [b] He continually loved them—"He loved them to the end"—that is—His love endured and never ran out...
8. Thus—husbands must persevere in love—they must endure in their love—they must love them to the very end...
9. John Angell James—"Christ's love to his church, was durable and unchangeable. 'Having loved his own he loved them to the end,' without abatement or alteration: so ought men 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 wrinkles of age have replaced the bloom of youth, and the whole person seems rather the monument, than the resemblance of what it once was..."
10. [a] Ask yourself this question—Am I a loving husband—and if not then resolve by His grace to make changes...
11. [b] Ask you wife her opinion—that is, Yes ask yourself whether or not you're a loving husband, but ask her opinion also...
12. [c] Remember your own Husband—Christ's love for His bride is not only your pattern, but also your salvation...
13. You know—as I was thinking through these 7 ways husbands are to love their wives, I found myself envious...
14. That is—what a wonderful joy and blessing to be a Christian wife—to be married to a loving husband (not perfectly but sincerely)...
15. But then it hit me—I am wed to a loving Husband, for the entire church is the bride of Christ, who is the only perfect Husband...
16. He loves His bride personally, graciously, sacrificially, openly, purposefully, tenderly, and continually—thus, He loves me in that way...