

28 So husbands ought to love their own 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 the Lord does the church.

30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Today we begin our third study on husbands from Ephesians 5.

As I have previously stated, the marriage relationship is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church and it can only have its fullest expression in the context of the Christian home. Whatever civil law may say about marriage, Christians are to be obedient to their objective and authoritative source, God's Word, to understand marriage and the family relationship

As we begin this morning the first thing we take note of is the importance of the husband loving his wife.

Previously we mentioned that this is done in three ways in the context of the previous passage in vs.25-27

First, giving of self. Secondly, sanctifying her for God's glory and lastly presenting her holy and blameless before the Lord.

He is morally obligated to, he ought to, love his wife as Christ loves his church, but now it is stated in terms of loving his wife as he loves his own body and thus as he loves himself.

It is necessary to make it clear that we are not talking about "self-esteem", self-loving, self-appreciation, self-actualization or any of the other psycho-babble and faulty Christian counseling messages that many derive from this passage and Mt 22:39 "And the second is like it: 'You

shall love your neighbor as yourself' and other passages containing the same phrases. Neither Jesus nor Paul is teaching husbands to love themselves. It is presupposed that we already do.

Our self-love can be expressed in two ways, sinfully and godly. The self-esteem movement elevates sinful self not godliness. It says we must love ourselves before we can love others. It says we must love ourselves before we can love God or understand His love. Self-love can be injurious. It leads to selfishness, adultery, suicide, lying, cheating and other sinful behavior.

It is obvious that Jesus, Paul and God the Father (Lev.19:18) all have the same purpose in declaring that we love others as ourselves. The purpose is to do it with the intensity and fervor of first loving God, with self being expressed by body, heart, soul, mind, and strength. These are to be seen collectively not as individual units engaged in loving God and our neighbor. If we loved God first and others as we should, there would not be much left for the self-love that produces the injurious and sinful things. If we loved others as we should, we would not need to love ourselves anymore because we would be expressing correct love already.

The Bible never commands us to love ourselves.

The context here is that as the husband and wife are ONE and he is truly loving his wife, then he is loving himself.

A common saying among the Jews was that a man's wife is "as his own body" and it is one of the precepts of their wise men, that a man should honor his wife more than his body, and "love her as his body" for as they also say, "they are but one body." The apostle seems to speak in the language of his Jewish countrymen as well as biblically on this point. In

this matter he is biblically and culturally engaged while addressing the Ephesians.

Yet, a new dimension to the love is added and it again fulfills the picture of Christ loving His body, the church.

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves His church.

The affirmation of this love is shown in the way the husband nourishes and cherishes his wife.

These terms are laden with affection and is known in the personal experience of Paul regarding the Thessalonians.

“But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.” 1 Thessalonians 2:7, NAS95.
“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.” 1 Thessalonians 2:7, NKJV.

The challenge for the husband is to be an authoritative head and at the same time be a gentle leader and nurturing leader. This expresses a tenderness of Godly headship.

As the husband feeds and cares, nourishes and cherishes his own body he is like wise to do this for his wife.

Husbands are to be nurturing caregivers.

The term care-giver is widely understood today, but not necessarily in the marriage context.

A caregiver for one who is terminally ill or immobile is usually seen as self sacrificing and knowing and understanding the needs of the one who is cared for.

Caregivers lose sleep, vacation time, family time, privacy, and recreational time. Doctors and others warn potential caregivers of the demands that will be placed on them. Warnings about the frustration and even the anger or bitterness or guilt that might rise up when one realizes that

perhaps they committed to something that they were unable to complete.

But the husband has no option if he is a godly man. He is to nurture, bring her to maturity and cherish, tenderly care for his wife in his role as care giver.

This takes time, effort, energy, study, conversation and as we mentioned last time – prayer.

Christ nurtures and cherishes His church.

All spiritual blessings that we need are already there for us in Him.

We are nurtured by His sustaining grace and the fruit of the Holy Spirit and we know how much He cares for us. We are nurtured by the Word of God and in the providence of God “ He is working to will and to do of his good pleasure in our lives.”

We are brought to maturity by him, for “He who began a good work in you is faithful to complete it.”

Because we are gifted by God with faith and repentance and an ability to have a desire to obey his Word through the glorious work of regeneration, we are nurtured in the goodness of God and we know that we are cherished because Christ laid down his life for His beloved, His bride, His church.

He is the Great Shepherd and He tenderly cares for His sheep. His tenderness in no way diminishes His authority, His power, His might, His role as Lord and Sovereign.

His tenderness does not contradict His fury and wrath against the workers of iniquity. His tenderness does not restrain Him from disciplining those whom He loves, for a Good shepherd does what is best for His sheep as He leads them to the green pastures and directs them to lie

down beside the still waters to prepare a table for nourishment even in the presence of the sheep's natural enemies. His rod and His staff are comfort the sheep and He will never leave or forsake His beloved. His nurturing and cherishing are demonstrated in more ways than we can count or ever realize. It is continuous and flows from the very essence of who He is.

Husbands, after the nourishing of your own soul by growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, your pre-eminent duty and obligation, "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies", is to cherish and to nourish your wife in all the care giving that Christ equips you give.

We do not have to elucidate numbers of practical ways for living out this truth. Each husband here, with little meditation should be able to conjure up a myriad of every day, down to earth, nitty-gritty situations that this truth can be applied to.

For it is she with whom you are one flesh. "31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

Paul has been guiding the readers in Ephesus to this fundamental truth from Genesis 2:24 and its fulfillment that can only be accomplished in Christ and His church.

The idea of the patriarchal headship is firmly posited in this verse. It is the husband who leaves, and as head, establishes a household, as it were. He leaves father and mother and is made one with his wife.

The direction of the oneness is from the husband to the wife. His role is to be seen as one. While the reverse is true, for one is one, his role and authority and care-giving responsibilities are specifically ordered around this oneness. This oneness is the reason that a husband has a wife. He is

one with her as Christ has a singular identity with His bride, the church. Whatever relationship Christ has as Lord over all things, does not in any way affect the fact that He is only the spousal head of his bride and we are made one with him in a sweet mystic union where He gives very specific and deliberate care and nurture to His bride that He does not give to anyone or anything else. His bride is the direct object of all things salvific. His bride knows intimacy with Christ, the head of His church that none other can know or share.

This is the mystery that Paul is speaking of. It would have been a mystery to those who had known this verse from Genesis before the coming of Christ. The idea of marriage and its uniqueness would have been understood, the penalties for defiling a marriage were understood by those who had been entrusted with the Word of God. But they could not have seen the picture or type that marriage represented in relationship to the fulfillment in Christ and His relationship with His bride, the church, because there was no church in the Old Testament era and the full idea of Christ in His bridegroom relationship to the church was not known.

In Adam and Eve was the picture of what marriage would truly be, the union between Christ and the church and therefore marriage is to represent what the union between Christ and His church is.

The standard for marriage is not male domination or egalitarianism, but Christ and His church. Headship and submission are a beautiful design put in order by God to reflect the love of Christ for His church and the love of the church for her Christ.

“The ultimate and telling proof that equality and submission may coexist in glorious harmony is found in the mediatorial mission of the Son of

God...who completed His mission in the true liberation of submission to his Father.” S. Lewis Johnson

We have been keeping our study in the context of the letter to the Ephesians and examining what they would or would not have known regarding these instructions from Paul.

This is not the only letter that gives instruction about the role of men and women or marriage. Further instruction from the Apostles is found in 1 Peter 3:1-3, Colossians 3:18,19;; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Tim. 3:4,5,11,12; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Cor. 7:1-40; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; I Cor 14:33b-40;; Rom. 16:1-16; Acts 16:14,15,18:24-26; Phil. 4:2,3; Gal. 3:28.

These set the standard for New Covenant believers.

We also look to the first three chapters of Genesis and the Gospels the wisdom literature and find examples in the lives of Old Testament saints. The final verse in our passage is 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Jesus said, Matthew. 37 And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’³⁸ “This is the great and foremost commandment.³⁹ “The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’

Husbands and wives, if you obey the great commandment you will follow the pattern of Christ loving the church and the church loving her Christ. Take courage and be strong in your faith.

Do not give in to what the predominant culture says is politically correct. The biblical record states that men and women are created equal yet different. Follow in the teachings of Christ and the Apostles. God’s Word

endures forever. The spirit of anti-christ will be seek to destroy your faith and weaken your stand, but stay true to the Word, "Heaven and earth will pass away but My words will not pass away" Mt.24:35.

Accurately handle the Word of truth, do not let the world interpret it for you.

Paul eventually teaches the church in Ephesus about spiritual warfare for exactly these reasons. The godly marriage is the ultimate expression of the relationship between Christ and His church. God haters hate the Word and the standards of the Word and Paul exhorted the Ephesians, 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We are to live counter-culturally when required.

We do not accept co-habitation, homosexual marriages, homosexual adoptions, adultery, fornication, unbiblical divorce, sexual perverseness or pornography as normal and healthy expressions of human sexuality.

We do not accept the Christian Feminist views of the role of women as pastor/elders and exercising leadership over men in the church.

I conclude with a quote from Alexander Strauch:

"Those who follow God's plan for the sexes, marriage and the church family glorify God. By following His plan, they allow God to be sovereign Lord over His creation. This brings God pleasure, and nothing is more important to a child of God than that.