

## Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 5:25-33 - Husbands Love Your Wives - Part 2

Last week we began this section on husbands. If you recall I mentioned most people think of this section as Paul teaching on husbands leading in the home. But it really doesn't teach that explicitly. It teaches that husbands are commanded to love their wives.

But last time we spent most of the time surveying the Bible and laying the groundwork that men not only lead in the home, but they are called by God to lead in every area of life - civic life, corporate worship, as well as the home. The leadership here is built in already.

But with that groundwork laid, this morning we are digging into this command to the husbands. The command is clear: love your wives.

That's the big picture this morning: husbands love your wives like Christ loves the Church.

### 1) Let's spend a little bit of time defining love.

The word love is agape, you've probably heard that word before. It's used 6 times in 8 verses. This is simple word for love. The problem is that we throw that word around all the time. And use it in a variety of ways. I love my wife, I also love my truck, I love the Mariners, and I love summer. What does love mean when it's applied to our wives?

Greek Dictionary: to have a warm regard for and interest in. It's when you have affection for someone. It's not just a cold, duty-based life-long arrangement. It's warm and kind.

A lot of times we downplay the affection a young couple has in engagement or early in their marriage. We view it as simple or whimsical. Especially those who have been married for decades often look at new love as fleeting because it's emotional and affectionate.

But this affection is exactly what the Bible calls for. When I do the wedding vows part of the vow is "do you promise to love and to what?" Cherish. Warm affection and interest.

Your affection and interest should grow. Like if we had a graph of you being sweet and kind and flirtatious -with your wife over time it should be growing. It should look like the stock market - maybe some ups and downs but overall increasing.

Husbands, do you have a warm regard for your wife? Do you cherish her? Are you gentle and affectionate?

Maybe you have a job and provide, maybe you don't cheat and you exert authority - fine. But are you affectionate with your wife?

The old trope that the longer you're married the less affection you have is probably true with many marriages. I know plenty of marriages that have lasted decades and things are ice cold. The husband and wife are little more than roommates who occasionally end up sitting across a table from each other. There's little affection, few kind words. Topics that are untouchable.

And it's absolutely tragic. Do you think that Jesus is indifferent to his bride, the church? Do you think he lacks kind words or affection or satisfaction worth the church? If so, you have a different Jesus than the Bible.

Are there tough patches? Sure but those should be the exception, not the rule.

The church that Jesus loves is very imperfect, very sinful, often very wayward. How often do we not pray, how often do we neglect the Word, how often do we neglect spiritual disciplines that bring us close to the Lord and justify it all? And yet Jesus still loves us infinitely and affectionately and sacrificially. **Read 25**

Gentleman, Jesus is our model for how we are to love our wives.

I've met people who seem proud of the amount of years that they have been married, as though that's an achievement because they've endured hell. And they have no affection for their wife, talk negatively about her, and don't esteem her at all. The number of years a man dreads his wife is no credit to him. But it is often the sad reality.

Side: Husbands and wives: unless you're getting specific counsel for a difficult issue, you should only ever talk positively about your spouse. Your spouse should never be the butt of your jokes, never be concerned about what you might say to your friends. It's not that they are perfect - there is a place for getting counsel. But unless that's the context you should seek to always honor your spouse.

So love is warm regard.

Another way love can be defined is "to have high esteem for or satisfaction with." That's another entry in the Greek lexicon. I think this is also important. Husbands can often look down on our wives. Maybe they're not as capable as we are in areas, maybe they have changed over the years. Maybe there are areas we wish they would be more sanctified or agree with us or be better at. And so it's easy to esteem them lower. And not be satisfied with them.

Israel in the OT - the church before Jesus - is called the apple of God's eye. **Zach 2:8**

God has love and affection and esteems the Church highly and is satisfied with the Church. And husbands should esteem our wives highly and be satisfied with who God gave us.

See, when we talk about love we need to talk about the emotional connection we have, as well as the sacrifice. But the sacrifice comes because of our affection. Love is not just all sacrifice and no affection. No - love assumes affection. It assumes highly esteeming the one who is loved.

So there's an emotional component - the affection and cherishing - to the definition. But there's also the practical outworking of love. **Turn to 1 Cor. 13.** You could have guessed we would turn here.

The context here is spiritual gifts - you can have all the spiritual gifts in the world, but if you don't have love you're nothing. In the same way, I think as husbands we can provide a home and income for our wives, we can protect them from danger, we can not be abusive and crazy. But if we don't have love - in action - what are we even doing?

So I want to read through this and just ask the obvious questions. **Read 4-8a**

No obviously, this goes both ways but the command in Ephesians is for husbands to love our wives so I'll frame it that way.

Husbands are you patient with your wife? Or do you blow up at her?

Are you kind and generous to your wife? Or do take you take care of you and she gets scraps?

Are you envious? Envious of other wives? Envious of other marriages? Or are you investing 100% into your own marriage?

When you talk to people do you boast about who you are? Or do you boast that Lord in his grace has given you such a marvelous woman?

Are you rude to your wife? With your words or actions? Like, would you say the things you say to her if Jesus was present with you? Because Jesus is always present with you. Wives, are you rude? It goes both ways of course.

Are you irritable and resentful? Are you grouchy to be around? Are you any fun? Christians are called to joy and I think happiness.

Joe Rigney mentions that the Christian home should be filled with laughter and fun. Unless there's big, weighty circumstances that cloud your life for a season, your home should be a joy. It should be a thing to commend to others, especially unbelievers.

We've had very tough seasons in life where there is very little laughter because life is so heavy. And I kid you not we started to watch stand up comedy just to laugh together. To have enjoyment and fun. Laughter is medically good for you: it releases endorphins, dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin - these not only help regulate your body but also build trust, connection and positive reward responses. Laughter and joy is not trite. It's important. Men are you cultivating that in your home?

I mean, when we're talking to unbelievers and say Christianity is the best, would they believe that if they saw how we lived in our homes for a few weeks? Is it warm and filled with laughter and joy?

Are you resentful to your wife? Do you remember everything that your wife has done against you? Or do you have a short memory of her wrongs? Wives, do you have a short memory of your husband's wrongs?

Do you rejoice in the truth in your home?

Do you bear all things gladly? Hope all things about your wife? Endure all things for your wife?

Because love never, ever ends.

Husbands, this is the love to which we are called. We've seen the emotion of love but these are how that love plays itself out.

Let's go back to Ephesians and look at the next thing. So we've looked at the definition.

2. Let me talk about the need for the command. God doesn't have to command things that come naturally. He never commands us to breath air or eat food. Those come naturally.

He commands things which are hard for us in our fallen state. And just like submitting to husbands is difficult for wives - arguably the hardest aspect of their lives. Loving our wives is the hardest aspect of being married for husbands.

And so it is necessary for God to command us to do it. In Christian homes God's primary vision for husbands is for us to love our wives. That's how we will display gospel love between Jesus and the church. **Look at Col. 3** for a moment.

This is the parallel to Ephesians 5. Paul puts it more succinctly here. **Read 3:19**

He says it positively and negatively. Love your wives - we've seen that. But here he adds a prohibition, do not be harsh with them.

Gentlemen we need to be very careful how we treat our wives. They are soft, they are delicate. They are not the enemy. They're also not like men whom we can be more direct and rough with.

When it's just guys we can shame each other, call each other names, raise our voices - and it's no big deal.

We can't do that with the ladies. Your wife is not your bro. She's not your buddy or your brother that you can lay into.

That word "harsh" means to make someone bitter. To make them hateful toward us. We can do that with what we say, how we say it, our neglect, our actions - lot of ways. Brothers you need to be extremely careful how you talk to your wives. Paul Washer once said that we should just imagine our wife is the daughter of God - and then treat accordingly.

Men be very careful what you say to your wife. Do not be harsh.

**Look** at Peter's admonition in **1 Pet 3:7**. Again, this is part of the household code that was given to all Christians at all times. Peter doesn't use the word love - but he uses something similar. **Read**

Peter uses a lot of synonyms with love. Live in an understanding way. Literally, live with them according to knowledge. Men, we need to know our wives. We need to draw them out and actively try to understand them. That means you actually have to talk to them and seek to know them. I don't know of any lady who is like "I really wish my husband didn't listen to me so much." Never met that woman.

And I'll admit, sometimes my wife has to tell me: "I'm trying to connect with you right now. This is me needing adult interaction after 8 hours of managing kids all day." Sometimes we need that reminder that we need to work to understand our wives. When you're coming home you should be preparing to engage your wife so you can understand her situation.

And it's hard to understand wives. I'll grant that. Ladies, I think if you're honest you'd admit sometimes you're tough to understand. That's always been the case, hence the command. We're still commanded to know and understand our wives well.

We also show her honor as the weaker vessel. As husbands it's easy to get frustrated that our wives are weaker. I think this is physical, emotional, and spiritual. But that's not because she's broken. She's weaker because that's how God designed her. And we show honor because of that weakness.

God made men stronger physically, emotionally, and spiritually. That's okay and good and brothers it's the reason we honor her more.

And by the way, Peter gives us the obvious conclusion. **Read 7**

Husbands have you ever had a hard time praying after a fight with your wife? Of course. It's really hard to pray to God when you're a brute to your wife. Unless you are a totally self-absorbed hypocrite, your prayer life will suffer when you're not understanding to your wife and give her no honor.

I think there's a sense in which God won't answer the prayer requests. If my kids are rude to each other I'm not going to grant their request for special treats. But I think more the idea is that your prayer life is hindered if you're not patient and gentle and kind to your wife as the weaker vessel.

**Side:** I've heard people say that wives aren't actually the weaker vessel because women give birth and that's hard and no man can do that. Sorry, that's just ridiculous. Women do give birth and that's amazing and awesome but doesn't disprove what Peter plainly says.

Peter is saying what we know is obvious - women are weaker and yet we honor them as such because they too will inherit the Kingdom.

**Turn back to Eph. 5.** We've seen the definition of love, the need for the command.

**3) The goal of the command is sanctification. Read 25-28**

So remember, Paul is telling us that the marriage union between a husband and a wife mirrors the true reality of the relationship between Christ and the Church. How did Christ love the Church?

He gave himself up for her. This is sacrificial love. He died for us when we were guilty sinners, dead to rights, deserving nothing but wrath.

Husbands, you are to sacrifice yourself for your guilty, sinful wife. This is the model that Jesus has given us. "But she's terrible!" Yes, I know. So are you. And Jesus still laid his life down to save you from sin and hell and wrath. This is where the rubber meets the road in marriage, gentlemen.

She's called to submit to your very imperfect leadership - even called to obey you. You are called to love and sacrifice to a sinful and guilty woman. That doesn't excuse her sin or guilt.

But your sacrificial love for her is not conditional. Husbands love our wives unconditionally, even - especially - when they don't deserve it.

What's the purpose in that? Well, Jesus's goal was to sanctify us. It was to cleanse us from all our guilty stains. To remove our sins as far as the east is from the west. That's why Jesus died - to save us, rescue us, deliver us from the wrath of the Father. It was spiritual in nature.

Husbands the purpose of your sacrificial love is similar: it's sanctification. You can't save your wife. But you can draw her near to Jesus by showing her day after day how Jesus has loved her in the gospel.

Every week we take communion. Why? It's a constant reminder of our need for the gospel. A reminder that we are not saved by works. We are saved by the sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus. It's physical picture of Jesus. Baptism is also a physical picture of our being united to Jesus in his death and raised up in his resurrection.

There's only one other picture of that reality that God has given: the husband's role in marriage. Men, when you love and cherish your wife, when you sacrifice when she doesn't deserve it, you are a living breathing picture for her - and everyone - of Jesus.

**Rom 5:6:** For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly...God shows his love for us that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

We're called to show the same love.

And the end goal of all of that is when you stand before the Lord and he's asking you about how you loved your wife and sanctified your wife you can say that you did your best to imitate Christ to her. That you loved her, you washed her with the water of the Word.

Men you should be having spiritual conversations with your wife. You should initiate spiritual conversations with your wife. You should be diligently teaching all of your family the Bible on a regular basis. You are commanded to do that. And it should be good and gentle.

For some reason these little video shorts pop up for me on Facebook. It's like someone has a rug that has been dragged through mud or something. And so the guy pressure washes it 5 times, gets a floor maintainer and scrubs it hard. Pressure washes it some more. It's oddly satisfying to watch, but it's a brutal process.

That's not how we wash our wives with the word. We're not taking the pressure washer of God's word to them. We don't berate them or threaten them. It should be nice and gentle.

Back when I had hair, I'd get my hair cut and they would wash my hair in these little sinks at the haircut place. And it was nice and gentle. Like a head massage. That's the kind of gentleness we should have with our wives and the Word.

The goal here is sanctification.

#### 4) The Benefit of loving your wife. **Read 28-31**

What's the benefit of loving your wife? It's that by loving her you actually love yourself. And the opposite is true as well: if you hate your wife you hate yourself.

I mean imagine someone was walking along and their foot got caught on something and they tripped. And while they're on the ground they decide to start yelling at their foot. "You dumb foot! What are you doing? Don't you know how important the rest of my body is?" That sounds ridiculous doesn't it?

That's what we sound like when we berate our wives and hate our wives.

See, in the marriage covenant we have become one flesh. That is exemplified and experienced in sexual intimacy. But the spiritual union we have is all the time. We're one together.

I often remind my wife of this when she's eating a bowl of ice cream next to me and I want a bite: we're one, baby.

That unity is true. So when we love our wives, we are in essence loving ourselves because we are one with our wives.

I think a lot of marriage get into trouble because people start taking sides and viewing each other as the enemy. This is yours and that's mine. And it's like we're wrestling for priority.

Paul says love your wife like you'd love yourself. Husbands, do you love your wives like you love yourself. Do you think about how to bless your wives like you think about how to bless you? Or do you love you more than her?

Because when we do that it's really a form of hatred. And just like we'd almost laugh at someone who hates himself as some kind of sociopath, that's what we're doing when we hate our wives.

We're called to nourish and cherish our wives. **Read 29**

That word nourish means to cause someone to grow. The idea is that we breathe life into them.

My wife plant these flowers all around our house. And they require attention. They require weeding and watering and plant food. She tends to them so that they grow and thrive. That's the idea.

Husbands, are you creating an environment in your home where your wife is thriving. Where she's growing spiritually, relationally. Is she growing in joy and love? That's environment you're called to create.

Nourish and cherish. Cherish is the word comfort. It's used in **1 Thess. 2:7** for what moms do for their children. When your kid falls down or hurts themselves, it's the moms who are sweet and tender and comforts the child.

Well, who has God designed to comfort and cherish and be sweet and tender to wives? The husband. That's your job to your wife. Not be cold or complacent. Not be unfeeling or rude. But to be so patient and kind and gentle. In fact, maybe you watch how she treats your kids so you can get an idea about how gently you should treat her.

When you do this you actually benefit your own life.

5) Marriage Points to a Greater Reality. I've mentioned this several times here, but I just can't emphasize it enough: when we get married we are this living breathing picture of Christ and the church. **Read 30**

What Paul is saying is that ever since marriage began in the Garden of Eden between Adam and Eve it has actually been a picture of Christ and the church.

It's been this hidden picture of Jesus for all humanity at all times but it was always there.

Many years ago we went to an airplane museum outside of Portland to see the Spruce Goose - the largest wooden airplane ever built. And I remember walking into this massive hangar and seeing all these planes and looking around and thinking: where is the Goose? I couldn't see it anywhere. And then my kids are pointing up and talking about some big thing and I look up and I'm standing under one of the massive wings. It's so monstrous, and so huge my brain didn't even realize it was there towering above me and filling this huge hangar. But then we you realize it's there, it dominates the whole museum.

That's like marriage. For thousands of years marriage was actually depicting Jesus and the Church. No one knew it, but it was right there for everyone in every culture for all of history to see. But it wasn't explained. It was a mystery.

Well, when Jesus came the mystery was revealed. It's no longer a mystery. God essentially said "I design marriage as this hidden picture"

So just know that this is what we're doing in marriage. Wives, the more you submit to your husbands like the Church submits to Christ and husbands the more you love your wives like Christ loved the church the more accurate the picture will be.

Often when I pray for marriages I pray that we would be a beautiful picture of Christ and the Church. That's what we want in our marriages. We should want to be amazing, beautiful, accurate pictures of Jesus and the Church.

Finally, 6) Summary of the marriage. **Read 33**

This wraps it all up. Husbands, love your wives. Full stop. Love her just like you love you.

Wives, you have an interesting addition here: respect your husbands. I think this goes along nicely with submission.

It's not just that we want you to follow our lead, we want you to respect our decisions. That can be hard, I'll grant you that. We do some crazy things sometimes.

But I think what husbands want more than anything is a wife you respects him. Who is proud of him. Who is his cheerleader and friend.

You chose him, to follow him, to submit to him, to let him guide you - encourage him with respect.

And through our marriages may Christ be honored.

**Pray**