

Husbands, Love Your Wives

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“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” – Ephesians 5:25-26

Men, this is God’s model for what we are to do for our wives. Make her radiant, make her glorious, lead in such a way that she is lifted up, so that what we do causes her to be enhanced in beauty, freedom, and the development of her gifts.

“In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.” Ephesians 5:28. We ought to love our wives as part of ourselves. Every time you hurt your wife, you hurt yourself. Every time you are selfish and want your own way, you hurt yourself along with your bride. He who loves his wife loves himself.

This is a strong command, but it also has great rewards. When you learn to lead in such a way that makes following a delight, “submission” won’t even be an issue in your house.

Paul goes on to say in verse 29, “After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds, and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.” The application is that we need to be devoted to our wives and provide for them emotionally, spiritually, and physically. This means “to provide for the development of and to attain the health of.” That’s what we are to do as men. Not only feed, but care for. Not just provide for, but cherish. The word “care” literally means to keep warm, to protect. How do you live with her in such a sensitive way that the light keeps glowing brightly? We do it as Christ loved the church, for we are members of His body.

So men, the command is not hard to understand, but it’s tremendously hard to do. It is to love your wife unconditionally. Christ’s purpose was to secure the bride of Christ for himself and to bring the church to full development. Our purpose in loving our wives is to help them become all God designed them to be. You don’t love her in order to get your way, you don’t love her to eliminate hassles, you don’t love her in such a way that everything is calm all the time. You love her so that she is able to be, in every way, what God designed her to be.

What Does This Mean?

Husbands must love sacrificially

Love your wife in a way that cost you something significant and precious. Don’t love her with leftovers.

Have you ever had your wife call you at work with a problem, when you could just sense her desperation? I don't mean that I run home all the time, but there have been times that I could tell, just from the tone of her voice, that this was serious. Those are the times I tell her I'll be home in a minute, and I am. Appointments can be rescheduled, but that moment can't be.

There are times when we need to communicate to our wives that they are more important than work, more important than hobbies, more important than us, more important than the kids. They matter most. We need to let them know that we are willing to sacrifice the most precious things we have: time, energy and money for them. It will produce a tremendous security and joy, in the long run, for both of you.

Husbands must love their wives intentionally

We are to help our wives develop. We talk a lot about discipleship in the church today, but the number-one person you need to disciple as a mutual co-heir of God's grace is your wife. Of course, you will really be discipling each other, but the point is that it needs to be done. Take the initiative to study with, pray with, and talk with your wife.

Some of you men are great at creating business plans. You visualize the target, establish a goal, and organize a strategy to meet that goal. When was the last time you considered your wife's growth and development with that same intentionality? Have you thought about how God might want her to grow, and what plans you might need to make, what time you might have to block off, in order to help her develop in those areas?

What is it that your wife does well? What would happen if you got on her team and told her you want to help her become all that God wants her to be? That's what it means to love "intentionality."

Husbands need to love their wives with sensitivity

This is where those little phrases "care for her, cherish her, keep her warm, nourish her spiritual, emotional and physical needs" come into play. Wives, you have no idea how hard this is for us as men to do.

We don't even know what you need sometimes – things like talking, listening, going on dates, planning weekends away, don't come naturally to many of us. But if we've learned anything of value from this past decade, it's the value of the strong, sensitive, tender man. We've exchanged John Wayne for Mel Gibson, and in terms of romantic role models, we've traded up.

What it doesn't mean

It doesn't mean you always do what you wife wants

You don't always do what she wants; you do what she needs. I wrote that on a three-by-five card one time because I was having such a hard time holding to it. It's so much easier, and feels so much better, short term, to simply please her. But if pleasing her is not in step with our Lord, the Choreographer's design, it's not the right thing to do. I've had to tell my wife, "No, our son can't go to the prom. We set the rules and conditions and he broke them."

It doesn't mean you don't have a life of your own

The point here is not to add fifteen or twenty hours to your week. You should not abandon all hope of having a life of your own; you've still got to work out a couple of times a week, have some male friends. "Loving sacrificially" doesn't mean you never see another football game.

It doesn't mean that you make her dependent on you. She needs to a life of her own. Maybe she needs to take some risks, to get out there and do some things, and you need to encourage her in that. Don't smother her. Remember, it's about dancing together and being so in tune with the divine Choreographer that you just make it easy for your partner to follow.

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