



Home : Sermons : June 5, 2005

Faithful and Fruitful Marriage – The Husband’s Duties (Eph 5:25)

A Redeemed Culture #10

Introduction – To turn to the duties of the husband and the wife is not to “*get to the bottom line.*” That kind of mentality turns this into a list of raw works rather than the fruit of the Spirit’s work in us. However, the Spirit is at work in you, isn’t He? “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God*” (Rom 8:14).

As Christ Loved the Church – The only way a man can obey Eph 5:25 is if he knows how Christ loved the church. This means that he must know, *personally*, the love of Jesus Christ.

A Gospel Call – These are not abstract principles that anyone can apply to make their marriage better. This is fruit that comes from a tree of its own nature. Fundamentally, a husband is faithful to his duties only if he has faith in the Son of God. Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross to draw all men to Himself, not simply to be a good example, but to bring life from the dead (John 3:14-17, 12:23-36). Do you see Jesus Christ lifted up for you? Have you called upon His name and have you believed that He was raised from the dead (Rom 10:9-10)?

A Discipleship Call – For a man to truly love his wife, he must love someone else even more (Luke 14:26). His life must now be a life crucified in Christ and lived by faith in the grace of God (Gal 2:20-21). To almost every marriage problem that exists, the husband should always concern himself with this – do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Has His grace had its way with you? This is where it must begin – Eph 1-3 again. And this is why the prayer in Eph 3:14ff.

The Love of Christ – Husbands are instructed to see *how* Christ loved the church in the following verses (Eph 5:26ff) so that they might, by the grace of God, imitate that perfect Husband.

Responsible Love – The first Adam tried to refuse his covenantal headship and plunged the entire human race into sin. The second Adam obeyed His role and duty as ‘head’ (v23). Husbands who love their wives take responsibility for everything that goes on in their homes, their cultural dominions. She may be guilty. He is always responsible.

Particular Love – Christ loved the church, one bride, and no other. The first actions of Christ towards the church is that He sanctifies her (v26 - sets her apart, calling her to Himself) and cleanses her with the washing of water by the word (an allusion to baptism and the gospel). The husband gives himself to his wife in affections and attention, as to no other.

Efficacious Love (v27) – Another way to phrase this would be ‘optimistic love.’ It is the “blind-love” that sees past all of the imperfections. But it is more than that. It is a love that changes the object of that love. A husband is told to love his wife with a view to the outcome – his wife will be more lovely.

Jealous Love (Ex 34:14, 2 Cor 11:2) – Jealousy is a virtue, rightly understood and applied. Christ (Paul speaking as Christ’s apostle) is jealous for His Bride. This jealousy is manifested in protection of his wife (from physical harm, Neh 4:14, and from spiritual harm, 2 Cor 11:2). Jealousy is manifest as well in the honor poured out upon his particular wife (Prov 12:4a), with a particular, well understood etiquette of honor and respect.

Selfish Love (v28) – A godly husband rightly understands that, first of all, he can never love his wife without loving himself and is thusly motivated to do so all the more. And secondly, he quickly comes to learn that, try as he might, he can never out-love his wife. But this also protects the marriage from score-keeping on who has sacrificed more.

Prayerful Love – His love is bathed in prayer, for he is imitating Christ, who prayed for His bride (John 17:9) and constantly intercedes for them (Heb 7:25). And because he knows how important it is that his prayers be heard, he treats her in a particular way (1 Pet 3:7) – *even if and especially if* she is the kind of wife right now that needs a husband to pray for her. Husbands have a duty to *believe* that God is at work in their marriage and to pray like it.

Constant Love (v30) – Just as his head is always listening to and responding to the needs of his body, so he as head is always listening to and responding to the needs of his wife. This is constant, organic, ongoing, love – like the love of Christ for His body. This love must learn to see all of the husbands actions as connected to his duty to love and care for his wife.

Nourishes and Cherishes, Like Christ (v29) – Finally, let’s consider how a husband is to love his wife in the way that Christ does the church, *nourishing and cherishing...*

Incarnational Love – The husband must provide for the physical needs of his wife. The law regulating polygamy in Ex 21:10 is instructive in teaching the bare minimum requirements. He is responsible for there to be full cupboards, clothing and closets for them, and conjugal relations (and all that is connected to sexual union, delight and fulfillment).

Before the Father – Christ is the means by which we are brought to the Father. Husbands, as Christ-like priests in their homes (not substitutes, but imitators), are to lead their wives to the Lord in worship, in prayer, in instruction from the Word, and in lifestyle. Like the Good Shepherd, they are to consider what are the next green pastures for their wives. This includes preparing her and your family to come here.

Nourishment From the Word (1 Pet 2:2-3) – There is no one-method-fits-all approach here. But by your example, by your provision of time, by your direct and indirect instruction, the Word is to permeate your home. We have more free access to the Bible and to good books and teaching than the world has ever known.

Cherishing/Comforting/Keeping Warm – How many times does Christ say and show that He loves His bride. Here this morning God is telling us. He will tell us at the Table again. He will tell us through His Word, in our psalms and hymns, in His constant blessings and encouragements. He will with wisdom choose the next thing in our lives to reveal His love for us.

And a husband must consider the Word and with wisdom choose the next thing to reveal his love for his wife. What is the next thing? Lead, man, lead.

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