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Husbands, Love Your Wives – Eph 5:25-33

Introduction – A church can have a well defined vision, purpose and plan for its future. But if it does not consider the life of the home as central to its ministry and faithfulness, every step forward will be lost in less than a generation. And central to the work of the home, is of course, the place of the husband and father of that home.

Finally, as Paul said, “*to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*” Do not think for a moment that just because we have heard a message on husbands, we don’t need a reminder. Just because we are hearing, or reading, does not mean we are doing. And just as sure as tomorrow will bring a host of new situations to your life, so will there be a host of new applications for you in this topic.

The Great Mystery – Being a husband, and how that is connected to the proclamation of the gospel, is a great mystery. Literally, it’s a mega-mystery. Paul himself confesses great wonder over what he is teaching (v32). Nevertheless, he adds, there is a pattern here for all husbands to follow. This is instruction for normal, regular followers of Christ – this is the Christian Faith 101.

A Command and a Promise (v25) – The command is to love and it is to love as Christ loved. And Christ loved *and* gave Himself away for His bride. Therefore, husbands, love and give...

A Particular End/Goal (vv26-27) – The Lord gave Himself away to accomplish certain things. He gave Himself (once for all at the cross in death) so that He might sanctify her regularly in the sacraments through the Word (and by means of the Holy Spirit – see vv17-21). Here is the pattern: one time, forever (like a husband at the altar) and then constant, regular nourishment and renewal (like a husband in the home). He did this so that He might present the church to Himself without any blemish.

Another Example (vv28-29) – When you are cold, hungry, hurting, how quickly do you take care of your body? In like manner, husbands are to nourish and cherish their wives as their own body. The template for the how one treats his wife is how he treats his own body – the attention, the care, the speed, the regularity, the repetition. A man who refuses to love his wife is really refusing to love himself – *but no one every hated his own body.*

The Closeness (v30-31) – First, we are to notice how intimately close our relationship is with the Lord. And that is a paradigm from which we also understand the paradigm of marriage. Our relationship with the Lord and a husband’s with his wife is connected, tangled, intertwined, woven, and knit together in ways quite mysterious, as the next verse suggests.

A Great Mystery (v32) – What a husband is to his wife, and what Christ is to the church, is all a great mystery. Everything a husband does speaks about Christ and His relationship with the church.

Comprehending the Mystery (v33) – And yet, there is a simplicity to this mystery. Nevertheless, Paul says, go home and love your wife. Such living brings understanding to the mystery.

Standard Applications – To every husband this command is given. Just like us, the Ephesian men battled with busy schedules, bills to pay, and the constant thorns of our labors in this fallen world. They struggled with anger, lust, contentment just like us. Like you, they were sinners called to be saints. The gospel had grabbed them and they were told to manifest that gospel in how they lived with their wives in the common life – in the kitchen, in the living room, in the marketplace, in the bedroom, everywhere. The gospel was to be incarnate in how husbands lived. It is the same today. It is the same for you.

A Reformed Marriage – Our doctrine of the cross and our proclamation of what Christ did for His people is manifest in how we as husbands treat our wives. In the larger evangelical world, our doctrines are sometimes considered obnoxious. But no one would find it repulsive if they were seen in the life of a husband obediently loving his wife. How many reformed homes have ugly marriages? And yet shouldn’t it be quite the opposite? A home where definite atonement is both preached and lived out ought to be a home where the loveliness of Calvinism is revealed to all in a beautiful marriage.

Keep it Simple – And it doesn’t have to be terribly complicated to apply. This is your first application of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world: love your wife as Christ loved the church. *Sola Gratia* – grace alone: she doesn’t earn your love, it is poured out upon her without merit. And she knows it, experiences it, and exults in it.

Imperfect? – Of course we are, all of us, in many ways. And when we are, we confess this sin to our wives (and children), put it behind us and imitate Christ again. Don’t make excuses and especially don’t blame her.

Hearing the Rebuke – Paul told Titus (Tit 1:12-13) to rebuke the Cretans for their lying and laziness; and the point was to

rebuke them sharply so that they would stop it. If Eph 4-6 is too hard to live out (and it always is), then go back to Eph 1-3 for instruction and encouragement. And then come back and do as you were told. You are God's servant. And He has told you to do something. And it has ramifications to the church, to the ministry, evangelism, and discipleship of the world around us. It is crucial that we give ourselves to this.

Dave Hatcher – January 7, 2007

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