

COLOSSIANS

The Role of The Husband - Lover

Colossians 3:19

Ephesians 5:25-33

INTRODUCTION

Someone has said the real problem in marriage is communications and it all starts in childhood. The problem being that every little girl wants to grow up to be a princess, but no little boy wants to grow up to be a prince. There is, however, a deeper problem than communications in marriage. The real problem is defective leadership.

All we have to do is look at and see that something is drastically wrong with most marriages in America today. One out of three marriages ends in divorce and in some parts of California and New York more divorces are occurring than marriages. Many of these divorces are taking place in middle and upper middle class homes. Let's face it, for at least fifty percent or more of all married couples, marriage has become a bore, a mockery, a burden and a failure.

Why? The basic reason is we have abandoned God's concept of marriage as it is found in the Bible. Even among Christian people there are alarming increases in divorce because Christians are ignoring biblical commands and principles for marriage. What's the answer? Bill Gothard says, "If all else fails, read the directions." If we would only obey the fundamental and basic rules of marriage as set down in Colossians 3:19 and Ephesians 5, the world would be a different place.

Last week we took up the role of the wife in a marriage which is submission to her husband. I'm sure many husbands last week were stabbing their elbows into the sides of their wives, but ladies get your elbows ready for this is your day in the sun. Whatever else the Bible teaches us, it clearly states that the key to success in marriage is the husband. Before God, the ultimate responsibility for a marriage rests with the man. The man is to be a lover to his wife. He is to love her as Christ loved the Church. Marriage is not a 50-50 proposition, but the woman is to submit 100% and the man is to love 100%. As goes the husband so goes the home. Until the husband takes his proper role in a marriage, there is little hope for a deteriorating home.

A couple were being given some premarital counseling by a marriage counselor. The counselor asked them what they thought it meant for a wife to submit to her husband, and a husband to love his wife. The woman sat strangely silent, but the man blurted out his answer. He said, "I think it means we are to love each other, and whenever we disagree, I'm to give her a hug and kiss and then we do things my way."

In Colossians 3:19, it says, **“Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh to them.”** This love is not warm, tingling, fuzzy feelings of affection. It is a love which actively and devotedly seeks a wife’s best interest. He is to do things which will better her mentally, physically and spiritually. He is to have her best interest at heart and to encourage her, building in her a positive, Christ-like image. Husbands are to love, which is a positive act, and they are not to be harsh with their wives, which is a negative act. That is husbands are not to embitter, exasperate and irritate their wives. Perhaps a good translation may be, “Do not be cross with your wife.” Husbands are not to harangue their wives, not to nag at them, not to expect perfection out of them. Archie Bunker may be humorous on a TV screen, but the way he treats his wife Edith is no pattern for a Christian husband. In Ephesians 5:25-33, the sister epistle of Colossians, we have a much clearer explanation of the role of a husband in a marriage.

THE COMAND TO LOVE (9 5:25a): ***Husbands, love your wives,***

The Apostle Paul addresses “husbands.” This is a command not to husbands in general but to Christian husbands who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives and who are willing to submit their lives to the teaching of inspired scripture.

Christian husbands are under a lot of pressure from the world today not to love their wives, not to be good providers, not to give her sufficient attention and not to be sexually faithful. The unsaved world looks at the Christian husband and says, “Get with it, man. This is the 20th century. We don’t keep those archaic commands any more. Sure love your wife but love your mistress too. Neglect your wife to make big bucks. Stay with your wife until the kids are raised or until you get tired of her.” These are thoughts that come from the pit of hell and Christian husbands will reject them to truly love their wives.

This is a command for the Christian husband to love his wife; therefore, it is not an option. Husbands: the God of heaven and earth has commanded us to love our wives. The Commander and Chief of the universe has given this holy imperative; therefore, we must obey or we have sinned against the Sovereign God.

Did you know that five times it is mention in the New Testament that husbands should love their wives but it never commands a wife to love her husband? I believe the reason for this is that the man by nature is a rough, crude and insensitive being and needs to learn to love other than on a macho, physical level. Women by nature are more tender, soft and caring beings and love comes more naturally. It is not that the woman is not to love her husband, but her main role is to submit to her husband.

Notice carefully, Paul takes three verses to tell women to submit, and six verses to tell men to love. The conclusion might be that it is twice as hard for men to learn to love as it is for women to learn to submit.

The word for “love” is the Greek word agape. The Greek language had three words for love. Eros, which was a deep, sexual passion for a person. The word eros was not used in the New Testament. Another word was phila, which was the love of affection or friendship as parents would have for children or sisters would have for brothers. Phila is used quite often in the New Testament. Both eros and phila love occur because there is something in the object loved which arouses that love. Both are loves of reciprocation. Then there is the word agape which is the word used here in Ephesians 5:25. Agape is rarely found outside the Greek New Testament. It is a love of the will and intellect. It is a love of feeling, but there is nothing in the object that arouses that love. It is a non-reciprocal love. It is an unconditional and unselfish love which comes from within and can only be produced by the Holy Spirit in a Christian. ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace,...”*** (Gal. 5:22). It is a supernatural love which loves not “because of” but “in spite of.”

A marriage of two non-Christians can never have agape love present. Agape love can only be received from God and only Christians know God and have the Holy Spirit in them to produce agape love. A non-Christian marriage can have eros and phila love but never agape. On the other hand, a Christian marriage will have all three loves present in it - eros, phila and agape. Eros is for sexual passion in marriage. Phila is for friendship and companionship in marriage. Agape is supernatural fellowship in marriage.

My wife Carol has her own definition of agape love. She says, “Don’t give me all that stuff about volitional and intellectual love. What I want to know is, will my husband pick up his dirty underwear and put it in the clothes hamper? Will he get up at two in the morning to help me with a screaming baby? Will he come into the house, seeing it is a mess and say, “This place is a pig pen!” or will he say, “Honey, I see you have had a rough day, is there anything I can do to help?” That is love!”

The world most certainly has a different concept of love than does the Christian. Love is a word grossly misused today. It is used to describe everything from sordid sexual passion to patriotic emotion. Sometimes we will hear some entertainer on TV say, “God love ya, America!” What does this mean? Usually the world gets love and infatuation all mixed up.

A number of years ago someone contrasted love and infatuation. Infatuation is when you think that he is as sexy as Robert Redford, as smart as Henry Kissinger, as noble as Ralph Nader, as funny as Woody Allen and as athletic as Jimmy Connors. Love is when you realize that he is as sexy as Woody Allen, as smart as Jimmy Connors, as funny as Ralph Nader, as athletic as Henry Kissinger and nothing like Robert Redford but you will take him anyway.

CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS ARE TO LOVE AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH (5:25b-27): *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, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

This verse does not just command a husband to love his wife but it tells him how he is to love his wife. He is to love “just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” I want to suggest to you that the husband also is to be in submission in the marriage. In Ephesians 5:21, Paul says to all Christians, “**Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.**” Then he goes on to speak of submission of wives to husbands and children to parents, and slaves to their masters, but does not speak of husbands being in submission but it is implied. The husband is in submission to Christ for his wife. He does not “give in” but “gives up” for his wife. The husband answers directly to Christ for the way he treats his wife.

A Selective Love. Christ died for a particular group of people, the Church. The Father chose the Christian in eternity past for salvation and Christ died for the sinner to make him righteous. The love the Christian husband is to have for his wife is selective, special, particular love. Husbands have picked out their wives and are to love them in a very special way.

A Sacrificial Love. Christ loved the Church enough that He died for her, so husbands should love their wives to the extent that they are willing to die for them. Husbands, if you cannot say today, “I’m willing to lay down my life for my wife,” then you really don’t love her as Christ loved the Church.

There is a story told about King Cyrus of Persia and one of his generals. The general’s wife had been apprehended for treason, found guilty and was condemned to die. When the general discovered what had happened, he rushed into the presence of King Cyrus, prostrated himself at the feet of the King and said, “O Sire, take my life instead of her. Let me die in her place!” Cyrus was so touched that he said, “Love like that must not be spoiled by death.” He pardoned her and gave them back to one another. As the husband and wife left the throne room and the presence of King Cyrus, the husband turned to his wife and said, “Did you notice how kindly the King looked upon us when he gave you a free pardon?” The wife turned to her husband and said, “I had no eyes for the King. I only had eyes for the man who was willing to die for me.” He won his wife by his sacrificial love.

A Self-Giving Love. Notice it says, “Christ gave himself up for the Church. Christ sacrificed His rights, self-interests and divine prerogatives to pursue the interest of sinners who deserved nothing. Husbands do not abuse their authority over their wives but set aside personal rights, interests and prerogatives in order to please his wife. He must learn to die daily for his wife, and that is far more difficult than dying physically once for her.

The husband does not “give in” but “gives up” to his wife. No husband is taking his proper role in marriage until he learns to give himself up for his wife. He is to open his heart to her, to share his emotions and dreams, his thoughts and his disappointments and his joys and sorrows. He is to expose his true self to his wife without reservation. By giving up to his wife he then allows her to fulfill her role as a helper.

A judge in a divorce court case said to the husband, “You mean to say that what your wife tells me is true, that you actually have not spoken to her for two years?” The man said, “Yes sir.” The judge said, “Why is that?” He replied, “I didn’t want to interrupt her!” I suspect that such a marathon of talking shows this wife was trying to fill some vacuum in her life, and the husband was not loving her as Christ loved the Church.

An Initiating Love. Christ took the first step and purchased the Church, His Bride, to Himself. He did not wait for the Bride to make the first move. Husbands are to assume the love initiative in the marriage. We are not to wait for our wives to make the first move or wait until they are deserving of our love. We are to move out and win the love of our wives by positive, loving assertive leadership.

A Generous Love. Christ graciously gave Himself without reservation to the Church and by the act of His death committed Himself to meet every spiritual, emotional and financial need of the Church. The Christian husband gives himself to his wife, promising he will meet her physical needs, financial needs, emotional needs and spiritual needs.

The three major causes of divorce are money, sex and time. The husband will find a way to meet these three needs so as to have a healthy marriage.

A Purposeful Love. In Ephesians 5:26,27, we see there was a definite purpose for the death of Christ for the Church. The NASB catches the sense best. It says, ***“That He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.”*** Christ’s purpose was to cleanse the Church, giving her forgiveness, to sanctify or make the church holy, which is making her progressively righteous over sin, and presenting the Church perfect before God. The work of Christ for the Church is past, present and future. By application, Christian husbands are to sanctify their wives; that is, they are to set them apart by being spiritual leaders to them. They are to encourage their wives to grow spiritually so they will develop into full womanhood and be tremendous helpers.

Husbands are not directly responsible for the spiritual lives of their wives. (each wife is personally accountable) but the husbands are indirectly responsible as they become motivators for godliness, initiators for holiness and leaders for righteousness. According to Ephesians 5:23, just as Christ is the Savior of the Church, the Christian husband is the savior of the wife. That is, men are responsible and accountable to God to be providers, protectors and leaders for their wives.

Since the husband is the savior of the marriage, then if a marriage goes sower who must take the blame? The husband! Men, we are responsible for the success or failure of our marriages. What a challenge! What a responsibility!

CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS ARE TO LOVE AS THEY LOVE THEMSELVES (5:28-33)

A Caring Love (28-30): *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - for we are members of his body.*

At the moment of salvation, the Christian was mystically and organically put into union with Christ so as to make up the body of Christ. The Christian at conversion became one with Christ. In marriage, a man and woman become “one flesh,” the wife becoming mystically a part of the husband’s body. They become an extension of the husband’s self and personality. Marriage is much more than two people sharing the same name, house and bed. The wife becomes one with her husband in personality and body. The Apostle’s point is that the husband is to love his wife as his own body because the wife is part of him. A man loves himself most of all but now he is to love his wife as though she were himself. Because of his union with his wife, he is to seek what is best for her because what is best for her is best for him. A man may reason, “If I always go about sacrificing for my wife, I am cutting my own throat. It is suicide to give all and receive nothing!” Wrong! A man giving of himself sacrificially to his wife is really benefiting himself because the wife is very bone of his bone.

A man “feeds” his own body. He does not abuse his body. He feeds it, protects it, grooms it, clothes it, and whatever. He makes sure he gets a balanced diet and proper exercise.

Every man probably takes anywhere from two to three hours a day just taking care of his body. What would our marriages be like if we gave two hours a day to our wives?

A man “cares for” his own body. This is an interesting Greek word. It means “to warm” or “to heat.” It was used of a hen gathering her chicks under her wings or a mother holding her child to her breast. Sometimes it was translated “to cuddle.” The husband needs to meet the emotional and physical needs of his wife. He needs to know how to say, “I love you” without any hidden motives for sex. He needs to learn how to sit down on the couch, hold his wife’s hand and listen to her. He needs to whisper in her ear that she is the greatest wife in the world. He needs to learn how to pray with his wife and for her. A wise husband knows how to tenderly and softly cuddle his wife. When cuddling happens, there will be plenty of sexual sparks in the marriage.

A Permanent Love (31a): *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife...* -- In marriage, a man becomes united, jointed to, glued to one woman. God’s ideal for marriage is that it would be permanent; that is, for life. When a man and woman take their marriage vows, they say, “For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health until death does part us.”

How tragic it is that so many men in their forties and fifties leave their wives for some younger woman. She has given her life to him, borne his children, sacrificed for the marriage, and now, as she grows older with bulges, gray hair and wrinkles, the man, in some kind of mid-life crisis, leaves it all behind for a fling. What a travesty! He lied to his wife and to his God when he said, “until death does part us.”

A Faithful Love (31b): ***And the two will become one flesh.*** -- To become one flesh is to consummate marriage with the sexual union. The sex act constitutes a man and woman as one physically and spiritually. The husband who loves his wife is faithful to her sexually. Husbands, in our marriage vows, we promised God and our wives before witnesses that we would be a faithful husband. This means that we are committed to one woman sexually for a lifetime.

An Honoring Love (33): ***However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*** -- The man is to so love his wife, honoring her, that that love causes her to respect her husband. So much of a man’s concept of love is tied up in the sexual, macho image, but for a woman love is all tied up in respect for her husband. When a man is taken off the pedestal by his wife, he is in big trouble.

There are certain things a husband must listen for in his marriage. If the wife says “You bug me” or “I need some space” or “I’m fed up with the set up,” this will pass because she is merely venting her emotions. But if she says things like, “I’m losing respect for you” or “You are disappointing me terribly” or “You just aren’t the man you used to be,” watch out because that is her way of saying you are coming down off her pedestal. Remember, her love is all tied up with respect.

CONCLUSION

Saved. Husbands, we have a big role to fill. It seems impossible that we could love our wives as Christ loved the Church. It is impossible naturally but not impossible supernaturally. God has given us the Holy Spirit where we can begin to love our wives as Christ loves the Church. In Ephesians 5:18, we read, ***“Be filled with the Spirit.”*** We can sacrifice for, care for, honor, set the example for and be faithful to our wives by God’s grace and divine power provided by the Holy Spirit. Our wives don’t expect perfection but they do expect willing hearts to be a leader and lover in the marriage.

Remember, husbands, a wife will have very little difficulty submitting to a husband who is loving her as Christ loved the Church.

There was a truck driver whose wife was required to fill out some kind of a form. For her occupation she wrote down “housewife,” and he objected. He said, “You are not a housewife, you are MY-wife.” That went a long way to cementing their relationship in marriage. Women are often impressed with the simple things done in honesty and sincerity.

Unsaved

Do you *want a* successful marriage? The way to get it is through Christ. If you are not a Christian, Christ can take your marriage and revolutionize it. You may have messed your marriage up but Christ can straighten it up.

Turn to Christ for salvation. He will forgive you, and when you are forgiven, He will give you the power to forgive others, even a husband or wife who has hurt you deeply.