Opening Words

Men, commit yourself to your wife's future. Commit yourself to make her glorious and radiant. Remember Christ's work for the church, how he loved the church and gave himself up for her.

186 Eph The Faith … in the Family 5 – Husbands and Wives

Isn't it great to have a Savior like our Savior! There is no god like our God who loves us. There is no god like our God who laid down his life for us. I hope you have been inspired by our recent broadcasts as we have been looking at Paul's words to husbands in Ephesians 5:25-33 where Paul uses the example of Christ's love for the Church to stimulate us to love our wives in practical ways.

After giving a brief but spectacular overview of all that Christ did to bring the Church to himself without spot or wrinkle, Paul then presented practical suggestions to husbands. He said, "Men, do you take care of your own body? Of course, take care of your wife's body in the same way. Do you make sure you have enough nourishment? Make sure she does as well. Do you cherish your body and protect it from harm? Cherish her health and comfort as well.

And then Paul says, "do this, because this is how Christ takes care of the Church. Christ is filling the Church with his power and is moving the Church into greater holiness and glory looking to the great day of glory when he returns. Paul then quotes from Genesis 2:24 which is a Hebrew poem about the purpose of marriage. "FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."

But in quoting this verse from the story of the first marriage when God brought Eve to Adam, Paul says, "What I am really talking about is the relationship between Christ and the Church." The human relationship and covenant we call marriage is a picture of the relationship God desires with his people. Paul says in verse 32, "This mystery is great; but in all that I am saying, I am really speaking with reference to Christ and the church."

Then, Paul remembers that his focus is not to take us back to heavenly thoughts of the future glory of the Church that he spoke about in 25-27, but to be practical for his readers so that in their homes they will live their faith. He concludes this section by saying in verse 33, "Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband.

Today, I want to summarize these thoughts for the wives and the husbands. Paul concludes this section by telling the men to love and the women to respect. In keeping with Paul's practice, let me speak to the wives first.

1. Wives, the main principle for you to remember is to be subject to your husband. Don't be rebellious. Don't be a sass. Don't be an arguer. But be respectful to him. That speaks volumes to a man's heart.

2. Recognize that your husband is your head, your spiritual leader. I'm not saying this but the Word of God says this. You want to be under his authority, even if his authority isn't that great yet. A leaky umbrella is better than no umbrella. Even if your husband is not yet saved, you can still show him respect and you can win him and build him up by your respectful behavior and speech.
3. Third, remember that Christ stands behind his authority. The way you respond to his authority is the way you respond to Christ's authority. The apostle John said, "Don't tell me you love God when you don't love your brothers. How can you love God whom you cannot see when you don't love your brothers that you do see?" In the same way, how can we say that we respect Christ and honor his authority when we don't see him, and then we don't respect and honor husbands that we do see."
4. Because he is your head, he is responsible to God and will answer to God. God is not going to ask you how great you led the family. He is going to ask you other questions. He will ask you about your example and your spiritual leadership in some ways, but he will never ask you what kind of a job you did as the head of your house. So, pray for him, and don't usurp his authority. That only leads to anxiety. Worry comes when we try to take responsibility for things that are not our responsibility.
5. Avoid a rebellious spirit. Some women rebel outwardly. Some rebel inwardly. A woman may feel confined, limited, or insignificant. But within your God-ordained role, when you submit to it, you will find that God has provided the essentials you need to make you into the kind of person you should be. In your home, with your husband and with your children you have a built-in discipleship course. Remember that subjecting ourselves means to order ourselves under someone's authority. It means to take responsibility for the tasks that are before us.

   One time, a woman came to D.L. Moody with several of her small children standing behind her. The woman said, "Sir, I believe God is calling me to preach." And Moody replied, "I believe that too," and pointing to her children he said, "and there is your congregation." Great words of wisdom. I think of Susannah Wesley who prayed daily for her children and two of them became the great hymn writer Charles Wesley and the great founder of Methodism, John Wesley. And remember, if your husband is not yet saved, he is part of your congregation also, but the kind of sermon that is most effective for him is the sermon of your behavior. The kind of sermon most effective for your children is the sermon of your example to them of how you love and respect your husband.
6. Here is another pitfall to avoid, if your husband is strong spiritually, don't hide behind his spirituality. You become a woman of faith and you be a stimulus to him and a partner in faith and spiritual strength. Don't get so busy with work that you fail to take time to nourish yourself spiritually in the Word. My wife loves it when I lead her in Bible study and prayer. But she doesn't depend upon me for it. She is in the Word herself. And so, seek to be the godliest, most dynamic woman of faith to assist your husband.

Husbands let me talk to you for a moment. Love your wives. I mentioned that love is used six times in this short section. The passage doesn't say anything to you about ruling over her. You are her head, but show it in the way you care for her, not in the way you order her. Nourish and cherish her

in every way. She may be your helper as Genesis 2 says, but she is not your tool. She is a unique creation of God who is valuable and precious to Him. She is your sister in Christ. She is a daughter of the King. Christ died for her. You will answer some day to how you loved her. 1 Peter 3:8 tells you to honor your wife as a fellow heir.

John 4 presents the great story of Jesus talking to the woman at the well and how that conversation led to the entire village coming to hear Jesus and embracing him as their Savior. When Jesus was talking to his disciples about that, he invited his disciples to enter the harvest with him. He said the goal of his work in that village was that the one who sowed the seed (Jesus) and the ones who would reap (the disciples) could rejoice together. They were co-workers and Jesus was trying to instill in them this vision of working alongside him. In the same way, husbands, view your wife as a partner in your mission to bear fruit for God.

Men, commit yourself to your wife's future. Commit yourself to make her glorious, to make her radiant. Remember Christ's work for the church that he so beautifully described in verses 25-27, how he loved the church, gave himself for the church, to sanctify the church because he cleansed her and washed her with his divine utterance of her justification with the goal of one day presenting the church to himself in all her glory, holy and blameless, without spot, blemish, or wrinkle,.

I know your wife isn't that way now. Neither is mine. I know your wife has problems and issues. So does mine. So does every wife. There is no perfect wife. The grass is not greener on the other side. In our image driven world, we are presented with the beautiful faces and bodies of women on the internet and TV all the time. And I'm not talking about pornography. I'm just talking about normal pictures of beautiful women, but you know what I am training myself to do? I am training myself to ask, "I wonder, what problems are beneath the surface of that beautiful face?" That keeps me anchored, and I also tell myself, "I'm glad I don't have to find out what issues she has." There is no such thing as a perfect, issue-free wife just as there is no perfect, issue-free husband.

So, as you see your wife on this side of glory, look upon her with the eyes of faith and commit yourself to love her and build her up and to make her glorious for the sake of Christ. Encourage her to pursue excellence and to pursue her glorious destiny with Christ. Remember the words of 2 Corinthians 3:18 which tells us that we are being changed from glory to glory, not from dishonor to glory but from glory to glory. There is a glorious aspect to our lives now and it increases every day. One day it will be revealed fully and perfectly.

Seek to be the godliest husband possible for the sake of your wife. If she is your helper, your help-meet as Genesis 2 says, then give her something to help you with. Give her a cause to live for.

We live in such a privileged time. There are so many wonderful and practical books on how to love and lead and submit and respect. There are so many Christian books on how to be a great husband and how to be a great wife. There are entire ministries devoted to help you with every conceivable issue in your family life. What a privilege. Take advantage of these opportunities. Let's live our faith … in the family. As I said, if we can do it there, we can do it anywhere.

May God bless you as you take these words to heart.