

# Husbands Who Love Their Wives the Way that Christ Loves the Church

By Al Felder

*“<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; <sup>26</sup>That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup>That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup>So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. <sup>29</sup>For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”* (Eph. 5:25-29)

Husbands should seriously consider the picture they are painting for a watching world. In your relationship with your wife, are you portraying Christ’s love and leadership to the Church? If you are not, God expects you to. In fulfilling his role within the home, a husband is to reflect Christ in His relationship with the Church. This is a high calling! When a husband fails in his role, he fails to represent the Lord’s love for the Church. He mars the image of Christ in a way in which his wife cannot because he is Christ’s authority in the home.

The standard that has been set by Christ for husbands is high. Even though the Church is not always what she should be, Christ’s headship is perfect. It is always proper and right. It is always wise, and it embodies all that God has commanded. Christ has given all for the benefit of the Church. A husband is to follow this example in his headship of his wife.

The Bible makes it clear that there is an order and function between the husband and the wife. The husband is the head of the wife. In other words, God has delegated a certain authority to the husband. This is for the purpose of God’s glory.

In reference to the home, the husband and wife are not equal in authority. This is no different from any other relationship in life. There is a head and there is a subject. Parents have authority over their children, the elders have authority over the church, an employer has authority over his employees, and a government has authority over its citizens. This is necessary in order for there to be order and balance.

With this position of authority, as with all positions of authority, there is a certain amount of glory. *“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.”* (1 Cor. 11:7) Ultimately all glory goes to God, but man does receive some glory because of his headship over the woman.

The glory that man receives is honor resulting from a good opinion. Consider the husband of the virtuous woman. *“Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.”* (Prov. 31:23) The whole point to this passage of scripture is that this

man was well thought of because of his wife. A wife can make or break a man. A man can be thought highly of because of his wife, or he can be looked down upon. Hence we have the saying behind every good man there's a woman.

There are some things that a husband must realize about his authority. First, his authority is not unlimited, it is delegated. Only God has unlimited authority. A husband's authority is limited by the commands of God's word. He does not have the authority to say anything, do anything, or require anything that he wants. A husband does not have the authority to sin or ask his wife to sin. You are under God's authority and you have been given a measure of authority by Him to carry out His revealed will.

Second, a husband's authority is not for his own benefit. Many marital conflicts are the result of poor leadership on the part of the husband. Any time a husband uses his position to accomplish his own fleshly gain, be irresponsible, or lord it over his wife, he is wrong. By doing these things he is failing to follow the example of Christ.

In our main text, the Bible points out that the wife is to be viewed by the husband as his own body. This relationship represents Christ's headship of the Church and the Church being His body. Christ exercises headship over the Church for her blessing, for her benefit, and for her good. His headship is a headship oriented toward the Church. As the head, He nourishes the body, cares for the body, and feeds the body. Everything that He does is to provide for the safety and welfare of the body.

Men, we are to follow the example of Christ in the use of the authority He has delegated to us. *"<sup>11</sup>I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf eateth them, and scattereth the sheep. <sup>13</sup>The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."* (John 10:11-14) Christ is the good shepherd. As such, He led by example while He was here on earth. Christ taught His disciples how to serve one another by example. He went before His sheep and they followed.

Men, we need family shepherds in the home today. We need men who are not hirelings. A hireling will only seek to serve himself. He will seek to take care of his own needs. He is selfish and will not lay down his life for his sheep. A shepherd, on the other hand, does that which is good for his sheep. He will nurture them, feed them, take care of them, and keep them from harm.

Men God has called you to be the shepherd of your home. You are the protector of your home. You are the head, and with that comes the authority to make the final decision. However, your decisions should not be for your own desires, they should be for the spiritual

benefit of your family. As the head of the home, husbands should not love to rule, they should rule to love.

Biblical headship is not just authority. It is a loving leadership. *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”* (Eph. 5:25) Christ gave his life for the Church and the husband is to love his wife in the same way. As we consider this love that Christ has for the Church, it can shed some light on the love that husbands are to have for their wives.

One of the first things that we find about the love of Christ is that He initiated it. *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”* (1 John 4:10) This is a love that seeks to benefit others and not itself. The love that a husband has for his wife should be a love that seeks her benefit. It should be his desire and goal to conduct himself in such a way that she will be drawn closer to Christ.

Also, the husband in taking the lead should be the initiator of love. The Church loves Christ because He first loved it. He took the initiative to sacrifice in order to make her a glorious church. There may be times in a marriage where the husband does not want to be the initiator of love. Maybe his wife has done something to offend him or maybe just plain old selfishness has set in. Despite these or other reasons, the husband is to love his wife for her benefit so that she may become more lovely.

The love of Christ towards the Church is verbalized. *“The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.”* (Jeremiah 31:3) Don't take it for granted that your wife knows that you love her. God assures us time and time again in His word of His love for us. A husband needs to be verbal in regards to his love for his wife.

Apart from telling your wife that you love her, there are also other ways to verbalize your love for her. Encourage her with words of appreciation. Let her know how much you value the things that she does. Spend time listening to her concerns with interest. Show compassion towards her, give her encouragement from God's word, and help her find the solution to problems that hinder her.

The love of Christ towards the Church is demonstrated by action. *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Rom. 5:8) He spoke the words of love and He lived them. His life was a demonstration of love towards His bride.

As husbands, we need to remember those things that we did when we were trying to win our wife's affection and do them again. We can brighten our wives day with an unexpected

card, note, flowers, or gift. We can also let her know that chivalry is not dead. We can demonstrate how special she is to us by opening doors for her, or pulling out a chair for her to sit. We can start practicing all of those little things we use to do.

Christ's love for the Church is a love that does what is best. <sup>26</sup>*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,* <sup>27</sup>*That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*" (Eph. 5:26, 27) Everything that Christ did was to make the Church glorious. Before, we were sinners. We were spotted and dirty. Christ, however, through His love seeks to make us pure and holy.

A husband should seek to do what is best for his wife in the way that he loves her. Help her when she looks like she needs it instead of waiting to be asked. Pray for her and lead her spiritually.

Finally, the love of Christ towards the Church is self-sacrificial. *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."* (John 10:11) Christ did not seek his own benefit. He didn't look out for number one, and seek to make sure his needs were met first and foremost. He completely and totally placed aside any thoughts of self, and gave His own life for the good of the Church.

I'm sure as husbands, we would all like to think that we would die for our families if the situation demanded. Yet, in the small everyday events of life we always put ourselves and our own desires first. What if we preferred our wives over ourselves? Instead of seeking our own interest, let's seek the interests of our wives. Spend time with her doing things that she enjoys. Make it about her instead of you.

In order for a husband to be the proper head and love his wife the way that he should, he must know her. *"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."* (1 Peter 3:7) A godly husband will take the time and make the effort to know his wife. Understanding her and her circumstances will help him be able to love her better.

The context of this passage of scripture is encouraging godly living in the face of persecution or harsh circumstances. In chapter two they are taught that God is honored by their obedience to foolish authorities. It is also stated that slaves honor God when they obey wicked masters. Then, chapter three tells wives to honor God even when their husbands do not obey His word, and for the husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way. The point to these verses of scripture is that we are to bring honor unto God by conducting ourselves according to His word regardless of the difficulties we may face.

As a husband, it may not always be easy to treat our wives the way that we should. During the time period of our text, it was not the practice of society to treat women the way that God commands. A man may have been ridiculed by his peers for treating his wife in a loving way. Also, the wife may have been difficult. Regardless of these or other factors, God's command to husbands still stands.

A husband must dwell with his wife according to knowledge. Basically, God is walking a husband through what it means to love his wife. A husband should have an understanding of his wife's capabilities, physical makeup, and the requirements placed upon her as a mother.

There are three things a husband can do in order to know his wife. A husband should observe his wife. Look, listen and learn. Be aware of her as a person. Second, ask questions. Don't play twenty questions, but do ask purposeful questions in order to gain information. Third, experience her world. Try to walk a mile in her shoes. Through these various means a husband should know his wife's like/dislikes; her capabilities/limitations; joys/sorrows; her physical and spiritual needs; what communicates love to her/what communicates indifference to her; and what encourages her/what discourages her.

The knowledge that a husband gains about his wife will then lead him to honor her. This involves showing esteem and thankfulness towards her. *"<sup>28</sup>Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. <sup>29</sup>Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."* (Prov. 31:28, 29) Peter gives us a deeper understanding of how we are to honor our wives when he says that we are to give honor to her as unto the weaker vessel. In other words, husbands are to treat their wives the way that they would something very valuable and delicate. We are to handle our wives carefully.

A husband can honor his wife in many ways. Tell her what she means to you. Tell her what you appreciate about her. Speak kindly to her in a way that you would like to be spoken to. Do not speak to her in a condescending way or belittle her. Instead speak to her in a way that will build her up. Constructive criticism or admonishment can be done in an encouraging way. Don't treat her as a lowly servant, but serve her instead.

In conclusion, in order for a man to be the husband that God wants him to be, he must study and apply God's love to his wife. It is a lack of love for God and his wife that leads a man to say that he doesn't have time to study or that studying just isn't his thing. If someone were to offer him millions of dollars to study God's word he would take great pains to accomplish the task. A husband must be willing to put his wife before himself even when it requires personal sacrifice. Christ sacrificially loved the Church to the point of death, and our goal as husbands is to model His love towards our wives.