

# The Christian Husband

In Ephesians 5:18, Paul instructs us to be filled with the Spirit, Who inspires us to encourage one another and to give thanks to God, as well as to submit to all divinely ordained human authorities. In verses 5:22-33, Paul gives us the first of three relationships in which we are to submit to one another; that is, wives must submit to their husbands in the Lord in everything. Paul then goes on to describe the life of a Christian husband. One will notice that he takes nine verses for this teaching, whereas he only took three verses in his teaching to wives. This may very well suggest that the role of the husband is not only more influential in the health of the home, but it may be more difficult to accomplish.

## Ephesians 5: 25-33

**25** Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, **26** that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **27** so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. **28** In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, **30** because we are members of his body. **31** “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” **32** This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. **33** However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

In this text, let us make four important observations.

### **I. The extent of the Christian husband’s love for his wife is his own death (vs. 25b).**

We are told that Jesus “gave himself up for her.” Jesus purchased all of our benefits through His own death. He held back nothing. He took the initiative, just as Christian husbands must take the initiative with their wives in expressing their commitment, deferring on matters of preference, and reconciling when in disagreement. The love of a husband is unconditional with respect to the behavior of his wife. Husbands must love with the love of Christ regardless of the response of their wives.

### **II. The goal of the Christian husband’s love for his wife is her glory (vs. 26-27).**

The Apostle Paul says that Christ died for us that He might “sanctify her.” That is, Christ has provided that we would be set apart as the very bride of Christ. He does this by cleansing us by His Spirit and the Word of God. The purpose of His sanctifying us is that He might present us to Himself in splendor. This is the kind of love that Christian husbands must have for their wives. The goal is her glorious presentation before Christ one day soon. Look at Ezekiel 16:8-14 to see the background of Paul’s thinking here.

### **III. The means of the Christian husband’s love for his wife is pastoral care.**

Paul seems to be shifting the analogy from Christ and the Church to the husband and their own bodies but, in fact, it is an expression of the same analogy because we are in fact Christ’s body. We, therefore, in imitating Christ, love our wives in the same way that Christ loves His body. The key words here are “nourishes” and “cherishes,” both of which are pastoral words. The husband feeds his wife materially and spiritually and he also cherishes her deeply, by discovering her real and felt needs and seeking to love her in a way that builds her up. The Christian husband *cannot* spoil his wife!

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**IV. The context of the Christian husband's love for his wife is covenant (vs. 31-33).**

Paul uses language in verse 31 that is used in the Old Testament to refer to our covenantal bond with God. "Holding fast" is covenantal language, which now applies to Christian husbands and wives (See Genesis 22, 24). When we enter into marriage, we enter into covenant, just in the same way that Christ has entered into covenant with His people.

In verse 32, we see that this covenant is not only a sacred bond, but it is a mystery. Here Paul is suggesting that suffused through our marriages is the Gospel reality of Christ and the Church. Our marriages are not ultimately about our happiness, but rather about displaying the glory of God. One can easily understand, then, why Satan hates marriages so much and seeks to destroy them, because they reflect the love relationship between Christ and the Church. In verse 33, Paul shows that the covenant is not only a bond and a mystery, but also an obligation to intimacy. When the wife respects her husband, and the husband loves his wife as Christ loves the Church, one will see an ordinary marriage become an intimate marriage. The reason our marriages are meant to be intimate is because our salvation restores us to an intimate relationship with God.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Why must Christian husbands love their wives?
2. Describe the love of a Christian husband for his wife.
3. What should a husband do if his wife does not cooperate by not showing him proper respect?
4. What is the goal of the Christian husband in his relationship with his wife?
5. How does the Christian husband "pastor" his wife?

6. What is at stake in the conduct of a Christian husband?

### Going Deeper

1. For husbands: Describe three ways in which your conduct best expresses love towards your wife. How can you decisively “up your game?”
2. For wives: What strategies do you have for loving your husband even when he fails to love you as he ought?
3. For single women: How does this text affect the way you think about encouraging your married friends? How does this affect your view of marriage?
4. For single men: What do you need to do to be the kind of man who would make a healthy Christian husband?