

## Marriage And The Bride Of Christ (Part 11)

The Husband's Responsibility

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Given 15-Jan-11; Sermon #1028

The world has a humorous, although sometimes negative perspective on husbands and wives, as the following statements show:

- Someone, probably a wife defined a husband as someone who, after taking the trash out, gives the impression that he just cleaned the whole house.
- Just think, if it were not for marriage, men would go through life thinking they had no faults at all.
- How do most men define marriage? A very expensive way to get your laundry done free.
- Young son asks his father, "Is it true, Dad. I heard that in some parts of Africa a man does not know his wife until he marries her?" The father replies, "That happens in every country, son."
- After a quarrel, a husband said to his wife, "You know, I was a fool when I married you," She replied, "Yes, dear, but I was in love and did not notice."

Well, we sometimes enjoy seeing the humor in the challenges and frustrations of our marriages because it helps us cope with the element of truth in them that borders on the absurd.

But on a more serious note, in Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul points to a spiritual purpose for marriage, as the husband and wife experience with each other the submission and the love of Christ. Love in marriage should be viewed at the highest level possible, because marriage in the Christian home must reflect the relationship between Christ and the church.

Sometimes the emphasis by this world's Christianity on Ephesians 5:25-33 is entirely

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misplaced; and it is read as if its essence was the subordination of wife to husband. The single phrase, “The husband is head of the wife,” is often quoted in isolation. The basis of the passage is not control but love.

Paul explains what this love that a husband gives to his wife must be based on.

**Ephesians 5:25-33** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

In these verses we see both the relationship between our Savior Jesus Christ and the Church, and the relationship between husband and wife. We can only truly understand the relationship of husband and wife as we understand the doctrine of Christ and the Church. Both relationships are founded on and sustained by love.

In my previous sermons, I presented the doctrine of Christ and the Church, and now that I have done that, I want to say something about the application of that doctrine, specifically as it relates to the husbands. Nevertheless, as you have noticed the apostle Paul is careful at the end of this section (in verse 33) to consider it also from the aspect and the perspective of the wife.

The application of the doctrine is introduced by the terms, ‘even as,’ and, ‘so.’ “Husbands, love your wives even as”—and then at the end, “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself.”

In other words, Paul is working out the comparison, which he has unfolded before us, of the relationship of Christ to the Church in terms of the relationship of husband and wife.

I want to approach this subject by dividing it up into two main sections. The first is

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concerning certain general principles with respect to husbands and wives. Then, having laid down the general principles, we can move on to the second, which is the detailed practical application of the principles to actual physical life.

And most specifically today, "What are the husband's responsibilities?"

Here are the general principles:

First, we must realize that in marriage, and also with regard to everything else in Christian life, the secret of success is to think and to understand. Nothing good happens automatically in the Christian life. It should be obvious that most of our troubles happen because people tend to assume that things happen automatically.

Some people hold on to the idea that spiritual conversion is simply that, "They all lived happily ever after." But of course, we know that that is not true. There are problems in the Christian life; and it is because we cause our own trouble and difficulties.

Obviously the solution to that is to think, to have an understanding, to reason the thing out thoroughly. The world does not do that. The trouble with the world, ultimately, is that it does not think. Parents sometimes knock on a child's head when he makes a stupid mistake and says, "Think!"

The world is like an immature and thoughtless child.

Take war for example. War is something that is inherently unreasonable and insane. Why then do people fight? The answer is because they do not think from a right perspective. They act instinctively; they are governed by human nature instincts such as desire and greed, anger and pride, and so on; and so they hit before they think.

**James 4:1-5** Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Human beings have an unlimited number of pleasures they seek after. If only they stopped to think from a right perspective, there would be no more war. The fallacy of the humanist is that he believes that all you have to do is to tell people to think. But as long as people are sinners they will not think from a right perspective. These emotional

forces are so much stronger than the rational forces that sinful man is always irrational.

Even after we become Christians we still need to enforce the principle of thinking from a right perspective. Even Christians do not think from a right perspective automatically; he has to be taught to think from a right perspective. Therefore, we are given the Holy Scriptures.

Why were they written? If a person who becomes a Christian automatically does the right thing, why did the apostle Paul have to write his Epistles? Or, if you can receive your sanctification as one act, one blessing, why were these Epistles written?

They are full of reasonings, examples, analogies, and comparisons. Why? In order to teach us how to think from a right perspective, in order to teach us how to work these things out, and how to gain understanding.

Thinking from a right perspective is essential, as Paul shows, in connection with this whole subject of marriage. The way the world looks at marriage, it more or less takes certain great things for granted. It relies on what it calls, "love." It relies on feelings.

Two people will say they have "fallen in love" with each other, and on the strength of that they get married. They do not stop to think and to ask questions; to do so is very exceptional. They are moved, animated, and carried away by the feeling that everything is bound to go well, that their happiness is certain to last forever.

All this was encouraged by popular literature and by pop-culture movies. But when you read the news you find that it does fail. But, why does it fail?

The answer is because they have never thought the matter through; and therefore it cannot stand up to the tests, the stresses, and the strains of reality that must inevitably come as life is lived from day to day with its anxiety, tiring work, and the many other things that produce difficulties.

And it is also because such people have never thought the thing through that they have nothing to fall back on. They have acted on feeling, on an impulse; they have acted emotionally. The mind has scarcely come in at all, with the result that when they are confronted by difficulties they have no arguments to fall back on; and many repeat the same process time and again.

When you consider the Christian position you find the main difference is that we are exhorted to think and to understand, and are given the power and the basis on which we

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can do it. That is the meaning and purpose of this marriage doctrine that is provided for us; so we are left without excuse if we neglect it.

The world has no teaching, but we are no longer of the world. So the first thing we are reminded of by Ephesians 5:25-33 is that we must think from a right perspective. We are even told how to do so, and it is given to us in detail in the Holy Scriptures. That is the first principle.

The second principle is that as Christians our conception of marriage must be positive. The danger is that if we think of marriage among Christians as essentially the same as it is with everybody else, then our conception of marriage is entirely worthless.

Christian marriage, the Christian perspective of marriage, is something that is essentially different from all other views.

The apostle Paul gives us a view of marriage that is not possible except within God's church; it is lifted up to the position of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. So the Christian's attitude toward marriage is always a positive one.

There will be no more positive and joyous occasion than that of the marriage of the Lamb to His righteous bride.

**Revelation 19:7-8** Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

The Christian's view must be positive and not negative in the sense that, because certain new spiritual factors have entered into the Christian marriage, it should last; whereas the worldly one is not as likely to last as long and as happily. It is not merely that we avoid certain things that the world does, but rather we must have a positive and inspired conception of marriage.

It is something that we must always think of in terms of the relationship of Jesus Christ and the church. We have to learn to test ourselves constantly by asking the question, "Does my married life really correspond to that relationship? Is it manifesting that? Is it being governed by it?"

In other words, as members of God's church we do not stop thinking about these things

when we have been married for awhile; we go on thinking about whether it conforms to this heavenly pattern, to this glorious ideal of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the church.

The great difference between the marriage of Christians and the marriage of non-Christians is that in the case of the Christian, the marriage becomes progressively more spiritually oriented, more Bible based, more Christ-like as it increasingly conforms to the ideal pattern. The Christian conception of marriage is one that continues to grow and develop and increase in the fruit of the Spirit.

So the second principle is simply that as Christians our conception of marriage must be positive.

The third general principle is one that has come out in the whole of the explanation. The real cause of failure in marriage ultimately is always the self, and the various manifestations of self. Of course, that is the cause of trouble everywhere and in every relationship. Self and selfishness are the greatest disrupting forces in the world.

Selfishness is an inordinate self love, prompting one, for the sake of personal gratification or advantage, to disregard the rights or feelings of others. This negative quality does not consider what is due to one's spouse and it is caused by a deficiency in regard to justice and goodwill.

All the major problems confronting the world, whether you look at the matter from the perspective of nations and politicians or from the perspective of industry and social conditions, or from any other perspective—all these troubles ultimately come back to self, to 'my rights', to 'what I want', with its offensive manifestations.

This always leads to trouble, because if two 'selves' come into opposition there is bound to be a clash, a conflict and even a fight.

Spiritually, the root sin of selfishness is disregard for and defiance of God. It is a manifestation of pride; and the leading self-delusion of proud people is their false security in themselves and their own resources.

The most important thing about selfish people is that God opposes them, and the most predictable thing we know about selfishness is that God will bring it down.

**Isaiah 2:12** For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up—and it shall be brought low.

**Isaiah 2:17** The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

In reality, according to the Bible, pride and selfishness is eventually and ultimately humbled. The biblical descriptions of selfishness add up to such a repulsive picture that they lead us to detest it, nevertheless the frequency with which it appears in the Bible exposes something of its persistent appeal to the sinful heart.

Self always wants everything for itself. That is true of myself, but it is equally true of yourself. When you have myself and yourself, you immediately have two autonomous powers; each deriving from its own self, and a clash is inevitable. Such clashes occur at every level, from two people right up to whole nations.

Paul's teaching in Ephesians 5:25-33 is designed to show us how to avoid the tragedies that result from self. That is why verse 21, "submitting to one another in the fear of God," was so important to consider before we began to consider the question of marriage.

It is the key to the entire paragraph; it is the basic principle, and it is to be true of all members of God's church. Whether married or unmarried, we are all to be submitting ourselves one to the other in the fear of God.

Then Paul goes on to apply the principle to the specific case of man and woman, husband and wife, and he made it so plain and clear that no one can miss it.

What is the essential thing about marriage? He says, it is this unity—these two have become one flesh.

**Mark 10:7-9** For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.

So they must not be thought of as two, they have become one. Therefore any tendency to assert the self immediately conflicts with the fundamental conception of marriage. In marriage it should be unthinkable for such a conflict to arise, because to think of these two as two is to deny the basic principle of marriage, which is that they are one.

"These two are one flesh." The wife is "the body" of the husband, even as the church is

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the body of Christ, and so on. So here we have, above everything else, the final denunciation of self and all its offensive manifestations; and we are shown the one and only way whereby we can finally be delivered from it.

So, the third and last general principle is that the real cause of failure, ultimately, in marriage is always the self. Those are the three general principles which, in marriage, underlie the practical application of the doctrine of the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Church.

## THE HUSBAND

Now the husband is to be governed by these principles. How does this work in practice?

First of all, the husband must realize that his wife is a part of himself. He will not feel this instinctively; he has to be taught it; and the entire Bible teaches it.

In other words, the husband must understand that he and his wife are not two; they are one.

The apostle Paul keeps on repeating that, "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." "The two shall become one flesh." This is true of our relationship to Christ; it is true also of our physical marriage relationship.

Let me put it in this way, it is not sufficient for us even to regard our wives as partners. They are more than partners. In contrast, you can have two men in business who are partners, but that is not the analogy. The analogy goes higher than that. It is not a question of partnership, though it includes that idea. There is another phrase that used to be common that puts it so much better; and it seems to be an unconscious statement of the Biblical teaching. It is the expression used by men when they refer to their wives as, "My better half."

Now that is a correct perspective. She is not only a partner; she is the other half of man. 'The two shall become one flesh.' 'My better half.' The word 'half' expresses the true balance that should be found in marriage. We are not dealing with two units, two entities, but dealing with two halves of a whole one. 'The two shall become one flesh.' It is much more intimate, as our relationship with God and Christ should be.

**I Corinthians 6:16-20** Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he



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who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Notice in verse 18 that it says, "He who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." A man's bride becomes part of his own body in marriage. Therefore, if he commits sexual immorality at any time before or during marriage, he sins against his future wife or present wife, as well as himself personally.

The same holds true for the woman. Sexual immorality is first a sin against God, then a sin against one's mate and against oneself. It brings nothing but heartache and does violence against the marriage. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?"

So, in light of this, the husband must no longer think singly or individually. That should be quite impossible in marriage, because he who loves his wife loves himself. In a sense, he is loving himself by being faithful to his future or present wife. This is the difference in a Christian marriage. You are not your own!

On the practical level, therefore, the whole of the husband's thinking must include his wife also. He must never think of himself in isolation or in detachment. The moment he does, he has broken the most fundamental principle of marriage.

Everybody sees it when it happens on the physical level, but the real damage is done before that, on the intellectual and the spiritual level. In a sense, the moment a man thinks of himself in isolation he has broken the marriage. And he has no right to do that!

There is a sense in which he cannot do it, because his wife is part of himself. But if it happens he is certain to inflict serious damage to his wife; and it is a damage in which he himself will be involved because she is a part of him.

He is even acting against himself; but does he realize it? His thinking, therefore, must never be personal in the sense of being individualistic. He is only the half, and what he does involves of necessity the other half.

In other words, he must never think of his wife as an addition. Still less, he must never

think of her as an encumbrance; but there are many who do think this way.

To sum this up, this is a great commandment to married men never to be selfish. Neither should the wife be selfish, of course. Everything applies to both halves of the whole, but today we are dealing specifically with husbands.

We have already seen that the wife is to submit herself. In doing so she has acted on the same principle; this now is the husband's side of the matter. He has to deliberately remind himself constantly of what is true of him in this married state, and that must govern and control all his thinking and all his desiring. In fact, it must govern the totality of his life and actions.

Ephesians 5:28 puts it more strongly than that, 'He who loves his wife loves himself'. Remember, the Apostle Paul uses the analogy of the body in describing the relationship between Christ and the Church. He also says in verse 28, 'So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.' Then he elaborates in verse 29, 'For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.' So, Paul teaches that we not only have to realize that the husband and the wife are one, but the husband must realize that the wife is actually a part of himself, according to this analogy of the body.

A man's attitude toward his wife should be his attitude toward his own body. That is the analogy. And it is more than an analogy! We have already considered the matter as it is taught at the end of Genesis 2. The woman was originally taken out of the man. There we have the proof of the fact that she is a part of the man, and that describes the characteristic of the unity.

The man, therefore, is told, 'So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.'

As is a very important and essential word because we can easily misunderstand it. Paul does not say, 'So husbands ought to love their own wives in the same way as they love their own bodies.' That is not the meaning. The meaning is, 'So husbands ought to love their own wives because they are their own bodies.'

A man loves his wife as his body—that is what Paul is saying. It is not as he loves his body so must he love his wife. NO! A man must love his wife as his body, as part of himself. As Eve was a part of Adam and taken out of his side, so the wife is to the man, because she is a part of him.

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I am trying to show that there is this element of indissolubility about marriage, except that it is broken by adultery or by the physical or mental violence of an unconverted mate. But what I am concerned with now is that a believing husband should see that he cannot detach himself from his believing wife. You cannot detach yourself from your body, so you cannot detach yourself from your wife.

Husbands must always remember that she is a part of you. You cannot live in isolation, you cannot live in detachment. If you realize that, there will be no danger of your thinking in detachment, no danger of your wishing and willing and desiring any detachment.

So, there cannot be any antagonism or hatred. Notice how the Apostle Paul puts it in verse 29, 'For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.' So any element of antagonism or hatred between husband and wife is sheer insanity; it shows that the man has no conception at all as to what marriage means.

Listen to this simple wisdom contrasting poverty with prosperity and love with hatred.

**Proverbs 15:17** Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred.

Normally people would choose luxury over privation, but what is more important is love. A home where material possessions are few but love for each other is present is far better off than a house of great opulence where people hate each other.

In the root of the Hebrew word for 'hatred' is the idea of ugliness, deformity; therefore to regard with feelings contrary to love; to abhor, to loathe, to relish dislike to. Love makes one's difficult circumstances endurable, whereas hatred undoes all the enjoyments that good food might otherwise bring.

No one ever hated his own flesh, but his wife IS his own flesh, she is his body; so he is to love his wife as his own body. So, in light of this, "How is a man to treat his wife?"

Let me give you some negatives first.

He is not to abuse her. It is possible for a man to abuse his body, and many men do abuse their bodies—gluttony, alcoholism, smoking, drug addiction, poor hygiene and various other ways. That is to abuse the body, to maltreat it, to be unkind to it. Any man

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who does that is a fool, because if a man harms his body, and abuses it, he himself is going to suffer. You cannot detach yourself from your body; and if you think you can, and you abuse your body, you will be the one to suffer. Your mind will suffer, your heart will suffer, and the whole of your life.

It is exactly the same in the marriage relationship. If a man abuses his wife he will suffer as well as his wife. So, apart from the inherent wickedness, the man is a fool.

**Proverbs 10:23** To do evil is like sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom.

If a man abuses his wife there is going to be a breakdown, not only in the wife but also in the husband, and in the relationship between the two. This breakdown will continue down through the children. The whole family suffers. It should be unthinkable that a Christian husband would physically or mentally abuse his wife.

But not only should the husband not abuse his wife, in the second place, he should not neglect her. Come back again to the analogy of the body. A man can neglect his body. It often happens, and again it always leads to trouble.

To neglect the body is appalling; it is foolish, and it is wrong. Man has been so constituted that he is a body, mind and spirit, and they are in intimate relationship one with another.

Let me illustrate it in terms of the frailty of the body. If I am suffering from laryngitis I cannot speak, though I may want to do so. I may be full of ideas and have a desire to preach, but if my throat is inflamed, I cannot speak. And this is true of the whole body.

If you neglect the body you yourself will suffer for it. Many people have done that, many students have done that; and through neglect of the body their work has suffered. That is because of the essential unity between these parts of our personalities.

It is exactly the same in the marriage relationship. How much trouble is caused in marriages simply because of neglect? Neglectful husbands spend their nights out at sports, or at their favorite sports bar, or playing video games or cards with their friends; and the poor wife is left at home with the children and the work. The crime is not that the wife and mother is at home, but that she is there without her husband.

The husband comes home at night just in time for bed and to sleep; and he gets up and

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goes out in the morning. Neglect of the wife leads to nervous conditions and anxiety that reveal themselves in various destructive ways.

It is deplorable that a man gets married and then proceeds to neglect his wife. In other words, here is a man who has married, but who, in essential matters, goes on living as if he were still a bachelor. He is still living his own detached life; he still spends his time with his buddies.

It is unnecessary for me to elaborate because the facts are so familiar in this society today. But sadly, variations of this neglect have existed in professing Christians. A married man must no longer act as if he were a single man; his wife should be involved in virtually everything in his life.

Husband and wife should do things together. Of course, the man in his job often has to be away from his wife for awhile; but his main goal otherwise should be to get back to his wife.

A home is not a dormitory where a man returns to sleep. There should be an active, ideal, positive relationship; and we must always keep it in the forefront of our mind. We must think from a right perspective. In reality, it takes God's guidance through His Holy Spirit for a husband to know how to rightly divide himself up in this respect.

It does not matter what a man does for a living; if he is a married man, he must not behave like a single man, even in connection with the Church's work, because in so doing he is denying the very teaching of the inspired written Word of God that he claims to use for guidance in applying its principles in his marriage and life.

There can be unthinkable selfishness in this as the result of nothing worse than thoughtlessness; but thoughtlessness generally leads to selfishness. In any case, a Christian should not be guilty of thoughtlessness.

So, the husband must not abuse his wife, he must not neglect his wife, and the third practical application of this teaching is that he must never take her for granted.

The positive element must always be there. A man's wife is not just his housekeeper. Remember what the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5.

**Ephesians 5:28-29** So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

It is staggering to realize the way that Christ nourishes and cherishes us. But that is the way that a husband should behave towards his wife—‘nourishes and cherishes’. And this cannot be done without thinking from a right perspective.

Once more, this can be worked out in terms of the analogy that a man does not hate his own body, but nourishes and cherishes it. So, how does he do this? We can divide it up simply this way: First of all, there is the issue of diet. A man has to think about his diet, about his food. He has to take in sufficient nourishment; he has to take it regularly, in the right quantity and quality and so on. All of that has to be worked out in terms of husband and wife. The husband must be thinking about what will help his wife, what will strengthen her.

As we eat our food we not only think in terms of calories, or proteins, fats, and carbohydrates; but another element comes into this matter of food. We are influenced also by what appeals to the palate, by what gives us pleasure and enjoyment; so also, the husband should treat his wife. He should be thinking of what pleases her, what gives her pleasure, what she likes, what she enjoys.

Of course, before he got married he went out of his way to do this; but then after he gets married he usually stops doing so. That tends to be the difficulty. Husbands must not stop, we must go on thinking; and since we are Christians, we should be developing our thinking more and more.

Diet involves both the mind and body—her whole mental and physical health. There has to be this active thought about the development of his wife, and her life, in this amazing relationship that God Himself has established.

And then, there is the issue of exercise. The analogy of the body supports this. Exercise for the body is essential; exercise is equally essential in the married relationship. It can mean something as simple as just talking.

There is so much trouble in marriage simply because of an absence of conversation. We all know how much there is to be said by way of excuse. The husband is tired, he has been at his work or his office all day, and he comes home weary and tired, and wants rest and peace.

That is true in most cases, but the same thing is true of his wife, with the difference that perhaps she has been alone all day, or only had little children to listen and talk to. Whether he feels like it or not he must talk to his wife. His wife needs exercise in this

sense.

Tell her about your job; tell her about your worries, about your interests; bring her into it.

She is your body; she is a part of you, so give her the opportunity to speak concerning it. Consult her; let her add her wisdom and understanding and perspective to your concerns. She is a part of your life, so bring her into the whole of your life with quality time talking.

In other words, you have to force yourself to think from a right perspective and express it to your wife verbally. Think about how it was before you got married. You were working and went home tired; but in the days before marriage, whatever you had been doing, you were very anxious to talk to your fiancée and to bring her into everything.

Why should that stop when you got married? It should not stop! The husband and wife are one. Look at her, and consider her as you do your own body, and remember this element of exercise. Bring her into everything deliberately. It will be positive for her, for her development; and it will be good for you yourself, because the whole marriage will grow and develop as you work at this.

And that brings us to the third matter, which is the issue of protection. Here is this body, it needs food, it needs exercise; but in addition, every man has to learn to understand his own body.

The apostle Peter says,

**I Peter 3:7** Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

So Peter tells the husband to remember that his wife is 'the weaker vessel'. This means that these bodies of ours are subject to certain things. We are all different even in a physical sense. Some of us are subject, perhaps to feeling cold, or subject to chills in a way that does not seem to worry others.

Some of us are so constituted that we have these minor problems; and we are subject to odd infections and various other things that come to try and test us. What does a wise man do? He takes great care about such things; he puts on a warm coat in winter, and he refrains from doing certain things that his body is not able to handle or is no longer

capable of doing.

He is protecting himself and his weak constitution against some of the dangers that we have to face in life. 'So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.'

Have you discovered that your wife has some peculiar temperamental weakness? Have you discovered that she has certain special characteristics? Is she nervous and apprehensive; or is she too outspoken?

It does not matter what it is in particular; she has certain characteristics that are, in a sense, weaknesses. What is your reaction to them? Are you irritated, or annoyed? And do you tend to condemn them or to dismiss them?

Act as you do with your body. Protect her against them, guard her against them. If your wife happens to have a worrying temperament, well, save her from it, protect her and reassure her.

Do everything you can to safeguard her from the weaknesses and the infirmities and the frailties; as you do for your own body, do for your wife.

Then, of course, there are great infections that come—a wave of flu, fevers, things that kill people. Corresponding things come also in married life—trials, troubles, tribulations, that are going to try and test the marriage to the very limit.

So what do we do with these? Once again, we look to the body analogy. What do you do with your body when you get that kind of illness, when you get that attack of the flu with a high temperature? The answer is you put yourself to bed for rest and you put yourself on the appropriate diet, and so on.

You do everything you can to treat the fever and to help your body to resist it. 'So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies'. If there is a problem, something that tries and tests your wife to the extreme, then, the husband is to go out of his way to protect his wife and to help her and aid her. She is the 'weaker vessel'.

I just want to qualify this and say that it seems that many wives endure sickness better than many husbands do. Some men can sometimes be big babies when they are sick; whereas, a mother is often up and around taking care of her children and husband when she is sick. Help her!

Now leading into the next point, you try to protect your body against infections by taking



Marriage and the Bride of Christ (Part 11) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

health supplements as a preventative measure. Apply all that to the married state. The fourth point is that the husband should do everything he can to build up his wife's resistance; to prepare her to face the hazards of life.

That is not to say that you do everything yourself, but train and educate her up so that she will be able to act also; so that if you die prematurely she is not left stranded and uninformed.

We have to think these things through in detail exactly as with the care of the body. And if an illness comes, take extra care, take the appropriate supplements, go out of your way to do those extra things that will promote and produce the restoration of health and vigor and happiness.

So we will leave the brief coverage of nourishing and cherishing at that for the sake of time.

## Love

Let's shift gears at this point to focus on the one overall essentially important principle that we have been looking at for 11 sermons. A man has to love his wife 'just as'—because she is—his own body.

**Ephesians 5:25, 29** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

If the husband makes Christ's love for the Church the pattern for loving his wife, then he will love her sacrificially. Christ gave Himself for the Church; so the husband, in love, gives himself for his wife.

Jacob so loved Rachel that he sacrificially worked 14 years to win her. True love 'does not seek its own' and it is not selfish. If a husband is submitted to God and Christ and filled with the Spirit, his sacrificial love will willingly pay a price so that she is able to serve God and Christ in the home.

Christ loves the Church, but He does not love her to get her to do things for Him, but He loves her so that He can do things for her. And it may even be necessary for the husband to give his life for his wife, or endure anything for her. No man has a greater love than to give his life for his wife.

The husband's love will also be a caring love. True love does not love to extract service, or ensure that its own physical comfort is taken care of; it cherishes and helps the one it loves. By His great care and not by threats or fears Christ has endeared Himself to His Bride.

Not much thoughtfulness and concern is seen in the husband who regards his wife, consciously or unconsciously, as simply the one who cooks his meals and washes his clothes and cleans his house and watches his children.

The love of the husband for his wife should be kind and compassionate so that both are becoming more like Christ who cares deeply for His Bride. In caring for his wife, the husband should certainly be producing gentleness, one of the fruits of the Spirit, toward her.

Even their physical relationship should be so controlled by God that it becomes a means of spiritual enrichment as well as personal enjoyment. The husband's affection toward his wife should be marked by gentleness and self control.

**I Corinthians 7:3-5** Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Self-control can be lost in a moment of impulse and passion, and the cost of such lack of self-control can be devastating. The husband is not to "misuse" his wife for his own pleasure, but rather is to show the kind of love that is mutually rewarding. Love always enriches, while selfishness does just the opposite—it degenerates.

The Church is moving toward perfection, but it is NOT perfect yet; it has spots and wrinkles. Spots are caused by defilement on the outside, while wrinkles are caused by decay on the inside. Because the Church becomes defiled by the world, it needs constant cleansing, and the Word of God is the cleansing agent. We are told in James 1:27, "Keep yourselves unspotted from the world."

Ideally speaking, there should be no wrinkles in the Church, since wrinkles are evidence of old age and internal decay. As the Church is nourished by the Word, these wrinkles

should disappear. Like a beautiful bride, the Church should be clean and righteous, which is possible only by the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

In Galatians 5:33, Paul closed with a final admonition that the husband love his wife and that the wife respect her husband, both of which require the power of the Holy Spirit to produce the right perspective and attitude. If Christian husbands and wives have the power of the Spirit to enable them, and the example of Christ to encourage them, why do so many Christian marriages fail? Because one or the other or both are out-of-sync with the will of God.

It is wrong for a believer to marry an unbeliever, but it is also wrong for two Christians to marry against the will of God. But even if two Christians marry by the will of God, they must stay in God's will if their home is to be the creative fellowship God wants it to be. This means that God's loving way of life must be lived 24/7—all day/everyday.

God wants every home to be peaceful and to produce the first fruit of the Spirit which is love, and this must be sown in peace. Unless both husband and wife strive to have a peaceful home and are walking in the Spirit, they cannot share the love of Christ.

The root of most marital problems is 'sin', and the root of all sin is selfishness. Submission to Christ and to one another is the only way to overcome selfishness, because when we submit, the Holy Spirit can enable us to love one another in a sacrificial, caring, and satisfying way—the way Christ loves the church.

Christian marital love is an unbreakable love. For the sake of this love, a man leaves father and mother and is joined to his wife, and they become one flesh. He is as united to her as the members of the body are united to each other; and would no more think of separating from her than of tearing his own body apart.

Sadly, sometimes there must be a divorce because one member of the marriage has made it impossible for the other member to continue with his or her intimate spiritual relationship with Christ, the Bridegroom. Our relationship with God, the Father, and our betrothal to Christ takes precedence over all human relationships.

**II Corinthians 11:2** For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

The whole Christian marital relationship must be in the Lord. In the Christian home, the

Father and His Son are always the priority of affection and reverence in any fellowship of the Spirit.

We must be of the same mind and not let our marriages have a drab intellectual uniformity; rather, we are to use our diverse gifts in an agreeable, cooperative spirit, with a focus on the glory of God.

**Philippians 2:1-3** Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Let us begin to wrap this up To experience the fellowship of the Spirit, a person must first possess the Spirit, that is, he must be a true Christian. Then, there must be a sincere desire to glorify God, since this is why the Holy Spirit was given. There must be a deep thirst for God's fellowship, and an affirmation that we cannot do God's will apart from His power.

The Spirit of God uses the Word of Christ to work in our lives. Notice the parallel in Colossians 3 to Ephesians 5.

**Colossians 3:16-24** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Being guided by the Word of Christ produces thankfulness, submission, love, and obedience in diligent service to Jesus Christ. When we are filled with the Spirit of God, we are governed by the Word of God.

Therefore it is essential that we spend time in daily Bible study letting the Word of God guide us, because then the Holy Spirit can work in our lives to produce: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in our marriages.

‘Husbands, love, nourish and cherish your wives.’