

The HUSBAND in Ephesians 5

Read Ephesians 5:22-33. This section deals with the marriage relationship; it's order and responsibility. There is always a great benefit if we live according to how God has designed and created us to live. Sometimes we think we know better, but who are we to question the Lord's ways? God has designed marriage with Himself as the Head, and that being the case, He has the right to order its operation the way He pleases – which in turn is best for us. It is in following His plan for marriage that we find Him in the middle of the marriage relationship bringing the love, joy, peace and the ultimate fulfillment that marriage was meant to have. With two-thirds of today's marriages ending in divorce today, it behooves us to obey God's method for a successful marriage. The world has demonstrated that it cannot continue successfully in a God-ordained relationship without God being there to make it work. Following God's direction in His Word is 100% successful.

As a background to our study, man has responsibility that is placed on him from the beginning of creation. In the garden after God created the first man Adam, he said ***“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”*** (Gen 2:15). God didn't bring Eve to Adam until after this command to dress (work, serve) and keep (guard, protect, hedge) the garden; he was created in this fashion prior to his introduction to Eve. He was already what God wanted him to be in and of himself and the only aspect left was his wife. Eve received a man complete from God. His labor before the fall was that of enjoyment and fulfillment. The important thing to note is, man was created to do work prior to the fall of Adam into sin. After the fall we read ***“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”*** (Gen 3:17-19). Now man was to gather his sustenance from the ***“ground”*** which is cursed, therefore the labor expended in this life to provide for himself and his family is that of difficulty, pain and exhausting labor. It is in the ***“sweat of his face”*** that he can eat. This is why Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10 ***“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought (nothing); but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample (example) unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”***

It is unnatural for a man not to provide for his own and it is against the natural arrangement of God for man in creation. To set aside this basic aspect of man's life is to fly in the face of God's means of providing for man. Man is to work 6 days and rest on the 7th. This was part of the Mosaic Law in Exodus 20:8-11 ***“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”*** Though we are not under the Sabbath ruling today, we still see the principle of man working, laboring and providing all through the Bible. Notice this was something that the family understood – everyone under a man's roof was to be provided for. Also the Sabbath principle is taken from the days of the creation week that obviously came before the Mosaic Law.

We learn in this passage that unless a man works, he can't worship. Unless he bends his back with toil (not necessarily physically for many jobs today are not physical labor jobs – at the time of this writing the culture was agricultural in nature), he cannot lift his face to God in worship on the 7th day. Unless man takes the responsibility to work and provide for his family, feeling the pressure from making his living from the ground which is cursed, he can't appreciate the graciousness of God in providing for him in his labor. He doesn't know what it's like to place his care on the Lord and seek God for the strength to work and the circumstances (in that culture rain, sunshine etc.) to provide everything that is needed for the basic substance of life. When the day comes to worship, he can lift his head in thanks to God for the help and gain the proper perspective for the labor in the coming week of work. Therefore if a man refuses to work, he can't properly worship. If he doesn't worship because he believes that the extra work time is more important than his worship, he can never return to the work place with the eternal perspective and is lost in the delusion that his work is his security and not God. This is why Jesus said ***“you can't serve God and mammon (money)”*** (Matthew 6:24).

You may be asking why Ephesians 5 is being related to work. The answer is simple, if a man refuses to work, he can't love and provide properly for his wife. A husband can't properly love his wife if he doesn't provide for her. He needs to know why he is laboring and that the results of his labor are a provision from God for his family. He needs to feel the weight of responsibility in caring for his family and learn how to share that burden with God and trust God in the midst of it. As he pours his life into providing for and caring for his wife, enabling her to be what God has called her to be, his heart becomes tender to her and sympathetic to her needs. There is a bond that God creates and a respect that a man's wife gains for him as he labors. Her security and respect grow as he consistently works to provide the support and security for the family and they both learn to appreciate the provisions of God. God's design is simple; obedience to His commands and principles yields success in the marriage relationship.

Paul says that as husbands you are to ***“love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”***. Love is always active and sacrificing, we learn that through the life and death of Jesus Christ, Who is the husband's example. Many men say that they would be willing to “die” for their wives and families, but the problem is, they are not willing to “live” for them. It is

a daily sacrifice to love by giving and serving. Often the people we are sacrificing for don't seem to appreciate it or acknowledge it as we would like, but that doesn't change the responsibility husbands have to their wives. Man doesn't always (probably hardly ever) acknowledge and appreciate God for the basic things of human existence, yet God provides them all for each one of us, whether we seem to deserve them or not. Beyond that, Jesus Christ went to the Cross for sinful people knowing that they would "despise and reject Him". This is the same fellowship of suffering that husbands may have to endure when their wives are not supportive of their efforts. The church does not always respond properly to the Lord, nor do wives to their husbands, but these facts don't change the issue – husbands are still to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

Beyond this, Paul says that ***"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word"***. This is not an injunction to read the Bible to your wife, though that is a good idea. It is a comparison made between Christ and the church. Jesus cleanses the church by the ***"washing of water by the word [of God]"***. Jesus said in John 15:3, ***"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."*** The cleansing effect of the word of God is seen all through Scripture. If a husband is allowing the word of God to direct his actions, motivate his ambitions and purify his thinking, the result will be a sanctifying effect on his wife. What Christian wife would not want a husband that treated her kindly, appreciated her efforts at home and complemented her on the job she does with the family matters while he is at work? For those women who must work because of the family financial situation, husbands must understand what a wife is going through to add a second job to their existing "job" already ordained by God at home. Only a wife and mother can fill the role that God has created. But when a woman has the extra strain of responsibilities outside the home, a husband should assist with general responsibilities around the home. Too many men treat their wives like slaves and expect them to jump when called. This is not cleansing her with the water of the word, but contaminating her with the attitude of the world allowed to reign in the house.

When we boil it right down, most problems in marital relationships between husbands and their wives stem from a lack of love from the husband. If a husband does not love his wife properly, she becomes insecure in his love and she then begins to question all his decisions and actions. She is not sure of his behavior because she is not sure of him. This parallel occurs in our relationship with God. As a Christian I don't have to question any of God's actions or decisions because I know that He loves me and will always work everything after the counsel of His own will for my life. The knowledge of His love plants a great security in my life and eliminates "circumstances" from driving my understanding of God's dealings with me. If I were not sure that He loved me, I would be a nervous wreck and always questioning His actions, decisions and motives. This results in a bad relationship and is unfortunately one that some Christians have with Jesus. This quickly deteriorates to a legal, business type relationship because it's the natural outcome when two parties (or at least one of the parties) can't really trust each other. There is a contact of sorts made to keep the other within acceptable parameters. Some Christians have this with God and they believe that if they perform certain tasks well, they obligate God to His part of the contract. This is what happens in a legalistic relationship with God and it can be easily paralleled in marriage relationships. Wives can get this way with husbands because of insecurity. They figure that if they can manage their husband's decisions (which means making his decisions for him) then that is a safe buffer which will prevent a total collapse of the whole relationship. For when a marriage is that fragile, many wives are in daily fear of the entire breakdown of the marriage by only one bad decision. But it is the husband's responsibility to love his wife so she is not forced into this position. The failure that may appear to be hers by her actions is possibly his based on his lack of love to her.

Almost all marriages fall apart because of the failure of a husband to take the spiritual leadership in his home with his family. Failing to love his wife is the first step in this tragic direction. Paul said to the Ephesians ***"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."*** The following verses show us that Paul is going back to creation for this concept. The command to love extends from man's basic responsibility and originated in creation. When Adam saw Eve, he recognized that she was ***"bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."*** (Gen 2:23). If more husbands could look at their wives and think of them as part of themselves and treat them with the same pampering and care that they do with themselves, there would be far less marriage problems to deal with. Paul made the following statement in Ephesians, ***"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."*** No man treats himself badly; he does for himself what he thinks will create satisfaction and contentment. Jesus takes good care of His church, His bride, His body. The church can only grow and develop as it receives the love of Jesus. It doesn't have a chance without His love. God created wives to flourish in the love and cherishing they receive from her husbands. It's the order of creation and the "order" of the day. It's sometimes possible to tell if a husband is treating his wife lovingly by watching her comfort and security with her husband. The question for the husband is easy; how's your wife doing?

Please read the Ephesians passage and answer the questions below. Read the Ephesians passage for a few days prior to answering the questions. The time and effort you put into understanding and applying the scriptures will yield direct result in your marriage relationship.

HUSBAND:

Why do you think that Jesus' relationship with the church is used as a parallel for marriage?

Since biblical love is that of giving, serving and sacrifice, how are you giving, serving and sacrificing for your wife?

What is this biblical love supposed to have as an effect in the life of your wife (see verses 26 & 27)?

How is a man who loves his wife to treat her as revealed in verses 28-31?

What is Paul's final statement and the one command to the husband in verse 33?

Does your wife believe that you love her?

If not, why?

How do you understand God's requirement for you as a husband in loving your wife?