

“Your Home for God’s Glory” – Part 2
Series: Marriage – What’s the Point? – Part 5
Ephesians 5:25-33

Introduction: Take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians 5, Ephesians chapter 5.

The story is told by Bryan Chapell in his book on marriage entitled *Each for the Other* of two brothers who decided to play by sandbanks that had been deposited by the river’s edge. The town that the boys lived in was dependent on the river for commerce and so it was often dredged to clear its channels of sand which would then be deposited in great mounds next to the river. These particular sand piles were especially dangerous because they were stacked in place while the sand was still wet. They would dry and form hard crusts that would often conceal cavernous internal voids formed by the escaping water. If a child climbs on top of the crusty surface that is hiding one of the cavernous voids then the surface easily collapses and the child falls in. Then the sand from higher on the mound rushes violently to fill the void exposed thereby trapping the child in the sinkhole of loose sand. This is exactly what happened on this particular day when these two brothers decided to go play on the sand piles.

When the boys did not return in time for dinner a search party was organized and they quickly found the younger brother. His head and shoulders were the only things protruding from the sand mound, and he was unconscious because of the weight of the sand against his body. The searchers began digging frantically to free him and when he was cleared to his waist he roused to consciousness. Immediately the rescuers shouted – “Where is your brother?” “I’m standing on his shoulders” he breathlessly replied. With the sacrifice of his own life the older brother had gone underneath his younger brother and lifted him up to safety.¹

This is the essential element of Christ-exalting marriage – self-sacrifice. Ephesians 5 makes known to us that an essential mark of walking in our new life in Jesus Christ is the willingness to give of ourselves for one another. The Church in general is told at the beginning of the chapter to walk in love towards one another just like Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. And again in verse 21 we are told to submit ourselves to one another as a fruit of the Spirit’s control and enablement in our life. And then in verse 22, the focus sharpens on the family unit, but the theme remains – selfless sacrifice for each other within the home. We are to submit to one another within the home by being like the older brother. We are to get beneath the others in the home at great cost to ourselves and put them on our shoulders. The greatest threat to a healthy marriage and to a Christ-exalting home is living for self. And the greatest benefit to marriage is found in giving of self for the sake of others. In our text wives are called to give of themselves to

¹ Taken from *Each for the Other* by Bryan Chapell, Baker Books, 2008; pg. 14-15.

their husbands by functioning well in their God-given role. They are to place themselves under their husbands as has been designed by God. But this does not dictate passivity to them as though they should simply be a jellyfish that waits for the current of leadership to come along to tell them everything they should do. No, it means that they actively work hard and think hard for the sake of nourishing and nurturing the family – like the Proverbs 31 woman is described – but these efforts are done with constant effort to honor the role of her husband as the leader of the home. The sinful human heart has made women generally struggle with their husbands for the leadership in the home to the point where they compete with him for the headship. But the text says here that she is to submit to her husband and in this we see her duty of selfless sacrifice for the sake of the marriage, and ultimately to the glory of God. But we talked about all of that last week, and so now the husband's duty of selfless sacrifice in the marriage is our concern. The wives give themselves to their husbands through selfless submission, and the husbands are to give themselves to their wives through love. But what does this love look like? What specifically is the husband being called to here in Christ-honoring marriage?

Well, definitions of love in marriage differ from romance to passion to emotional highs to giving gifts to being kind and nice to engendering good feelings toward one another. If you walked the streets of Wichita and asked 100 people to define what the love of a husband to his wife should look like, you will probably get at least 50 different answers. But thankfully, we have something more sure than the opinions of pedestrians – we can set our gaze and define our course by looking to the all-sufficient Scriptures. How does God define this love the husband is to have for his wife? So we come to Ephesians 5 with that question guiding our study – what kind of love is this that the husband is to have for his wife? Let's read Ephesians 5:25-33. What a gloriously deep passage of Scripture! In our exposition of this text this morning we will not be exhaustive, but pointed, for it will take eternity to exhaust the glorious truths of this text. Of the many wonderful truths in this text I intend to point you to five answers to this question – what kind of love is the husband to show to his wife?

I. Constant, Not Sporadic – 25a

- a. The first answer is that his love is to be constant and not sporadic. The very first phrase in this passage commands the husband to love his wife. We will learn the intricacies of this love from the rest of what the text says about it, but the very first truth about this love is that it is a constant love. This verb is a present imperative that has present authority on every husband in this room. By present authority I mean that this command to love your wife is never a command that finds its completion so as to be able to move on to another thing. Rather than leaving the to do list, it remains at the top of the list – husbands love your wives. Every husband that has ever lived has had this as the imperative on his marriage – love his wife. And every husband has always had this imperative on him – love your wife.

- b. You see the temperature of the home is largely set by the husband as the head of the home. We saw this last week when the text indicated to us the unalterable fact that the husband is the head of the wife. He has inescapable leadership as the head of his wife – God has placed him there. The Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden did not create Headship and Submission. Sin has twisted Headship and Submission, but it did not create them. And so within the marriage the husband can choose to be a domineering head or an angry head or a selfish head – but however he chooses to lead – this will dominate the home. And so this command lets us know of the kind of leadership we are to exhibit in the home. It is to be a leadership dominated by love. Husbands, we have the right, the duty, the privilege to lead our wives. It is high time for us to stop cowering from this responsibility, to stop shirking it through domineering or through absence and cowardice. We must lead as the head of the home, but we must do so by love. Notice the text does not say – Husbands, master your wives, or Husbands, domineer your wives, or Husbands subject your wives, or even Husbands, lead your wives. No, it says Husbands, love your wives.
- c. As the head, our primary responsibility is to love our wife. Where our actions or our leadership or our words lack this love we will not be leading in Christ-exalting ways. Where we are sporadic in our love for our wife – in other words when we are kind for a while or self-sacrificing for a few moments, but then our leadership is distinguished by some other quality then our leadership will negatively affect our wife. This command to love your wife is a constant command and demands constant obedience.
- d. You see men, the woman is tainted by sin in that she will struggle with your leadership if she is not struggling against her sinful heart, but your struggle is different. Your struggle is that you are naturally self-loving. Your sin tendency is to think about and serve and love self, and so the constant command here is that you constantly deny self and love your wife. This love must be constant, not sporadic.

II. Pioneered, Not Novel – 25b

- a. Then the very next phrase tells us this love is pioneered not novel. So, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church.” This is not a love that you have to create or engineer or pioneer. It is a love that has been pioneered. The trail has been blazed. You must set your wagon in the ruts of following Christ’s love for the Church and in this you will see and know how you are to love your wife. We need look nowhere else for the way of love. We must only look to Christ and his love for His Bride so as to understand the love we must have for our own bride. You don’t need to pioneer – you need to follow the pioneer of love – Jesus Christ.
- b. And this strikes again at the heart of the essential spiritual state of the husband who is able to exalt Christ. You see, living a love like Christ’s would mean that you must know this love of Christ – not just in theory or in word, but in the

depths of your soul. It means that you would have spiritual eyes that are able to see this love of Christ on the pages of Scripture. It means that you have a new life born again by the very love of Christ bringing you out of sin and into a right relationship with God. In other words, in order for you to love like Christ, you must be a believer in Christ. You must personally know this great love through a relationship with Jesus. If you have not been born again to new life, then you simply are not fully able to love your wife as you ought to.

- c. But for those of you who know Christ, the clarion call of the Scriptures is that to be a believing husband to your believing wife you must love her as Christ has loved the Church. The way is made plain – we know what it looks like and we can walk in it because our Lord has blazed the trail.
- d. Husbands, the glorious beauty of this pioneered love is that in Jesus we find the motivation and the source of this love. By looking to Jesus – by knowing His love for us – we find this love that we need to give to our wife. By looking to Jesus we not only see and find this love, but we are rightly motivated to show this love. So, this command to love your wife is not a call to dig deep within yourself and drudge up every ounce of love that might exist within you. No, this call to love your wife is a call to look to Jesus – gaze upon His love and find there the motivation, the way, and the source. Being loved by Him you are now able to love like Him.

III. Self-Sacrificing, Not Self-Preserving – 25c

- a. And the primary element of Christ's love for us, and therefore of our love for our wives, is self-sacrifice. Our love is to be self-sacrificing, not self-preserving. So the verse says, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." This pioneered love of Christ was a love which at its core was self-sacrificing. It gave of self for the benefit of others. Jesus laid down his life for the church – gave it over to her – and in this we know love. This is what love is. It is the giving of self for someone else. In fact, the love described here in Ephesians 5 cannot be the love of Ephesians 5 without this element of self-sacrifice. If you take out this last phrase you do not have the love that Jesus pioneered. Self-sacrifice is its essential nature – its very essence!
- b. Which means then that self-sacrifice must be the very essence of the love that we as men are being called to here in the text. If we are to love like Christ, then we are to love by giving ourselves up for our wives. So, by looking at Christ's love we can learn a few things about the nature of this self-sacrifice which is love.
 - i. It is complete sacrifice
 - 1. We can learn from Jesus' expression of this love that this is a complete sacrifice. He gave up his position of exalted glory. He laid aside the full expression of his attributes as the Lord of all. He as Creator of all assumed the humble position of one of His created. He took on human flesh. He became servant to all, born of a virgin

in the lowliest of places in life. He obeyed the will of the Father and he gave his very life to die the cruelest of deaths so that sin's penalty could be paid and mankind could be redeemed.

2. *There has simply been no greater sacrifice. There has never been one that is more complete or thorough. Christ gave everything for His Bride. Jesus sacrificed it all.*

ii. It is given in adverse conditions

1. But this complete sacrifice of Jesus for His Bride was not given when the sun was shining and the roses were blooming and the wind was calm. No, Jesus gave this complete sacrifice in the face of adverse conditions. We often hear of unconditional love with the point being that we are to love no matter the condition of the other person. But to be more explicit about Christ I think it is helpful to realize the sacrifice of his love was given when the conditions were adverse. In other words, the sacrifice Christ made for his bride was not a sacrifice given when circumstances were neutral or positive, but rather when they were completely negative, sinful, and opposed to Him.
2. Just think singularly about the week of Christ's death for a moment. This was not a week of great human joy and delight. This was not a week where Christ had warm fuzzy feelings about mankind. This was not a week where humanity was treating him all that well. No, they were rejecting his authority, seeking his death, arresting him unlawfully, spitting on him and mocking him, nailing him to a Roman cross, and watching him die a slow and painful death. Just think of his 12 closest followers during those days – the ones who would become the beginning of His Bride. These disciples simply couldn't grasp what was going on even though Jesus had been making it plain for months that he was going up to Jerusalem to lay down his life for them. In the midst of the most emotionally difficult moments of Christ's life in the Garden they couldn't even stay awake to pray with him. In the face of the betrayer whom Christ had said was coming and was willing to submit himself to, one of them cuts off the ear of a soldier and tries to pick a fight. When he is in the midst of his illegal trial almost all of them abandoned him, and one of the two who didn't ended up denying that he even knew him three different times. How do you think these things made Jesus feel? Do you think this was an emotional high for Jesus where he was so glad he had chosen these men as the foundation of his Church? Do you think he had warm fuzzies about the prospect of these men

leading His Church? Do you think he was particularly glad and happy about this complete sacrifice? You see the conditions in which Christ was called to give himself up for his church were conditions adverse to natural human love and affection. The object of Jesus' love had proven to be unlovely. Nay, the object of Jesus' love had proven to be wicked, sinful, and opposed to Him. He was called upon to sacrifice in the most emotionally low time of his life.

3. And yet, he knew the answer to their wicked treatment of Him was not abandoning them and finding another. He knew that walking away in search of another bride was not the way. Rather, he knew that complete sacrifice in the face of adverse conditions was the path to winning His Bride to Himself for all of eternity.
4. And so I wonder husbands – when your wife isn't particularly lovely to you, when the feelings are not there, or when she may even be in sin against you – when that happens, according to the example of Jesus – how should you treat her? In other words, what did the sinful condition of the bride do to Christ's love? Did it put a wet blanket on the fire of his love for her, or did it throw another log on the fire? Did it quench or motivate? What does your wife's negative qualities do to your love for her? When she is struggling with her own selfishness, when she is speaking in ways that don't honor God or you, when she is questioning your leadership, when you are not getting along, when she is not as physically attractive to you as she used to be – what then? What should be your response to these realities? The world would tell you, and your own selfish and sinful heart would tell you that maybe it is time to get out. Maybe it is time for you to find a woman who will love you like you deserve and who will treat you with respect. Maybe it is time for you to just admit that you have fallen out of love with your Bride and move on.
5. But this would be self-serving rather than self-sacrificial. This would not be true love at all for once you take the sacrifice out of love you lose love. You see, you cannot command emotions, and so the text is not here saying – love your wife in an emotion filled way. But you can command actions of total sacrifice, and so the text is here saying – husbands love your wives by doing what Christ did. Give yourself up for her totally and completely and sacrificially. Don't let the adverse conditions that will come into any relationship hinder or hamper your love for her. Don't let those negative times be an excuse for your lack of love. Rather let those times motivate your love as you see her in her deepest need. For

what does she need more at those moments of difficulty and sin than sacrificial love? She doesn't need a sin-filled response, but rather she needs a sacrificially loving response.

6. And in a love expressed like this – one that is filled with complete sacrifice and is given even in the most adverse of conditions – the emotions will follow, and these emotions will be deeper than you could have ever expected. You see, you and your bride had a certain kind of emotion on your wedding day. There was great excitement and splendor and it was easy to commit your lives to one another on an occasion filled with such beauty. But those feelings fade. The flowers die, the crowd leaves, the tux goes back, the dress goes in the closet, and real life starts to settle in. The commitment of for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part – this commitment gets put to the test when things are actually worse or poorer or sick.
7. In Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters From Prison* he is writing about marriage and he states that up until marriage it is a couple's love for one another that has sustained the relationship and then he says this – "It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love."² You see, the commitment of one man to one woman for one life now is tested in the daily run of life. And if the love is primarily emotion based then the love will not last because it will be missing the key element of lifelong love – self-sacrifice. Emotional love is essentially self-serving in that it will love the object of love as long as the object of love gives the needed emotional return, but when that return diminishes or vanishes then there must be a new object of love. And so, many marriages fall apart because the husband loved with an emotions based love that did not last. But husbands, we are to love with a self-sacrificing love and this self-sacrificing love has the commitment of marriage as its base. It is the marriage that now sustains our love. This is an active love that is often given in conditions adverse to us. Sacrifice is not often easy or enjoyable in the moment, but the long-term joy of this sacrifice is far greater than the short lasting joys of emotion based love. And I can guarantee you that the emotions will come and they will be deeper and more enjoyable. The passion you had on your wedding day for your wife has passed, but the passion you can now know as your

² As quoted in *This Momentary Marriage* by John Piper, pg. 18.

promise of continual love sustains the self-sacrificing action of love – this type of passion runs deeper and lasts longer. It is like the difference between a small mountain stream and Niagara Falls.

IV. Efficacious, Not Emotional – 26-27

- a. For this to be true then your love must be efficacious and not emotional. In verses 26-27 we are given the reason for the self-sacrificing love of Christ for his Bride. He loved her in this way so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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. You see, Christ was compelled to love his bride through the sacrifice of himself by the need of his bride to be sanctified, cleansed, washed, and redeemed. He came to win his bride to Himself. He laid down his life so that in losing his life he could gain his bride. There was no other way. She was impure and in need of a Savior, and so His love for her demanded His sacrifice. And so Christ's love for His Bride is a purifying and sanctifying love. In other words, his love is efficacious, not merely emotional. If his love for us was merely emotional then he would have never been compelled to lay down his life for the Church. But His love had greater motives than emotional passion and desire. His love had the motive of purifying and sanctifying so as to win a Bride to Himself. Before this loving work of Christ to sanctify us we were not pretty, we were not beautiful. In fact, as Romans 5 makes clear, it was when we were ungodly and still sinners that Christ went about the sacrifice of himself out of love for us. And what does this love do? Well, it does not leave us where we are. It does not allow us to stay ungodly and in sin. Rather, the love of Christ for his Bride sanctifies us and cleanses us from all sin and redeems us and makes us a beautiful bride – one that is without spot or blemish and is full of splendor.
- b. Husbands, your role is similar. You are not the Savior of your wife in the same way that Jesus is. Your love is not as efficacious as His is, but your self-sacrificing love must have as its goal the sanctification of your wife just as Jesus' love did. This does not mean that you can somehow through your efforts make her holy and sanctified. God alone can give the increase. It is the fruit of His Spirit's work that will show her holiness, but God uses appointed means in all of our lives to bring about this process of continual sanctification. And husbands you are one of the primary appointed means by which your wife will be sanctified, and the path to this sanctification is your sacrificial love for her. This means then that her beauty, her splendor, is dependent in many ways upon you as her head. God has designed for her to flourish and grow in beauty under the careful, kind, and self-sacrificing love of her husband. And so, to be explicit here – husbands, your wife's loveliness is your responsibility. This beauty is much more than physical beauty. This imperishable beauty of a woman is described in 1 Peter 3 as a quiet and gentle spirit that is the product of a rightly adorned heart. And this type of beauty

is facilitated by the sacrificial love of the husband for his wife. He is primarily responsible for her loveliness, and this loveliness is appointed to come to the wife through the self-sacrifice of the husband.

- c. You see, husbands, your love cannot be motivated by the emotional highs and passions that you occasionally know in marriage, for these have you at the center and as long as you are at the center of your motive for love your love of this particular woman will only last for a while. But if you are motivated, as Christ was, by the desire to increase the loveliness of your Bride through self-sacrifice, then your love will never quit and will never fail. No matter the adverse condition of your wife's heart toward you, you - by the grace of God - will respond with sacrifice of self because your motive is her own sanctification. This is the high calling of the sacrificial love of the husband. It is to be efficacious, not merely emotional.
 - d. And so men, I ask you, is your wife more lovely today than when you married her? This is the expectation of the text. Those who are joined to Jesus through His sacrificial love are those who are effectively being sanctified by His very love. So, with your wife, if you are loving her as you ought, then she ought to be more lovely today than when you married her. This is not some achievement of your effort, but this is merely the following through of God's appointed means. He still receives the credit for you are what you are by the grace of God. You can never love her as you ought to - as Christ loved His bride - apart from His grace, but if that grace is flowing through you and you are loving her as you ought, then she will be more lovely today than the day you said "I do." And so, allow this question to be a check on your love for her. Is she more lovely today or not? Have you loved her sacrificially or not?
- V. **As Self, Not Of Self - 28-33**
- a. In verses 28-33 we see one last truth about this love. We see that it is a love that is to be as self, not of self. So husbands are told in verse 28 that in the same way that Christ loved the Church they are to love their wives. Well, how is that exactly? Well they are to love their wives as they love themselves. So, in verse 28 the text says "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies." Literally the text says here - husbands should love wives of themselves as bodies of themselves. "He who loves his wife loves himself."
 - b. We are not being told here that if we love our wives with this sacrificial love then we are finding the backdoor to what we all naturally do anyways - love of self. In other words, we are not being given some God-ordained mode of manipulation within the marriage relationship to gain what we all want anyway - love of us! No, what is being said is that the wife is indeed one flesh with the husband and so he should love her like she is. When he loves his wife through sacrificing for her he is actually loving himself because she is one with him. She is him and he is her. This is just like Christ and the Church. He is the Head and we are the body -

we are one with Him, and He with us. When He loves us sacrificially He is loving His own flesh.

- c. So it is with a husband and wife, for as we know from Genesis 2:28 which is here quoted, the man who has left father and mother and has held fast to his wife has become one flesh with her. Then in verse 29 we are given a physical analogy of the spiritual reality. No man has ever hated his own physical body – but rather he willingly cares for it, nourishes it, and cherishes it. We do not long for our physical bodies to simply survive but we work hard to make them thrive. And this natural care for our physical body is the perfect analogy to our care for our wife for she is one flesh with us. So, just like you make sure you have eaten well and have exercised well and are well cared for physically because you nourish and cherish your flesh – just like that, you are to love your wife as you love yourself because she is of yourself.
- d. The alternative here is instead of having love for your wife as yourself to simply have love for yourself. You see, though she is one flesh with you, it is all too easy to deny this spiritual reality and treat her as a totally separate entity. It is all too easy to have love of self rather than love as self. But the husband who is following in the footsteps of Jesus will be a husband who denies self so that he can love his wife as he would love himself, and in so doing he is actually loving himself because his wife is one flesh with him.
- e. This indeed is the great strain of following after Christ in a godless age. We are told in 2 Timothy 3 that one of the key signs of the last days will be a love of self that will dominate the culture. And yet, we are all to be those who are like Christ and not like the world. We are all to be those who deny self and love others as we would have loved ourselves. But husbands, there is one relationship in which this is to be especially true – the relationship with your wife. You should be a man who is known for his Christ-like love, but in the closest relationship to you – the one with your wife where she is one flesh with you – you are to especially live out this self-sacrificing love.

Conclusion: Men, do you see the wonderful opportunity that is here presented to you in the text to make Christ known and exalted in this world? This type of husbandry is not known in our world – the type where the husband loves through self-sacrifice which is constant and complete and given especially when the conditions are adverse. The type where sacrificial love allows the wife to blossom in true beauty. The type where you deny self as a true servant leader like your Lord and put the needs of your wife above your own. This type of husbandry has God-given potential to exalt Jesus Christ. Husbands you have been given the privilege of pointing to Christ by how you love your wife. This is not a game. Marriage is not a joke. This is deadly serious business for in marriage you have the glorious duty of making Christ known to your wife by loving her as Christ has loved you.

As we close this morning I hope that everyone in this room has grown in their commitment to love others as Christ has loved them. We are all to be known by this kind of love for others, and husbands you are to be especially known for this type of love for your wife. Wives, your response to this love is that you are to respect, reverence, fear your husband as the parting words of verse 33 say. You are to reverence and respect him simply because of the position God has placed him in over you as your head, but all the more as you see him live out Christ-like love for you.

But I wonder, what husband here has been deeply convicted of his own self-love? What husband here has been shown that his self-love is lying to others about the love of Christ for His Bride? Man, do not delay your repentance. Allow the Spirit of God to sniff out the stench of this self-love and draw your heart to abandon it for the sake of loving your wife as Christ has loved the Church. Let's pray.

Benediction – 1 Corinthians 16:21-23