

# THE POWER OF LOVE

## EPHESIANS 5:25-27

PAUL J. BUCKNELL



*<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.” (Ephesians 5:25-27).*

There is no doubt that the most powerful weapon that we have is love. Love is remarkable in the way it can for the good to change others. God in His gracious ways sent His only Son Jesus Christ down to earth and die for us. God has introduced love into the world and yes right into our hearts as His children.

God has given man, in particular husbands, a special responsibility to extend that power of His love to our wives. There is nothing that compares to the wonderful way genuine care, tenderness and affection moves and touches the soul of another. God has designed us all to receive that love. If we receive that love, like sunlight to a flower, we open and blossom releasing all of our glory and perfumes. Without it, our lives are shut up in loneliness, remain unopened and hide the glories stored within. This is true for all of us, but it is especially true for women, even our wives.

I have seen much pain in couples' lives. You have, no doubt, also seen it. It always largely comes about through the lack of a husband's love. Love is a choice. It is like driving. You turn the wheel where you want to go. And so it is with love and marriage. I know some of you are thinking, "Pastor, you do not know my wife. If you knew her, you would quite clearly see where the problem is." Actually, I think I do understand. Most husbands have difficulty with their wives just at this point. Each month our wives get critical and unsupportive. We did not get perfect wives when we got marriage. This is what makes the apostle's words here so powerful. He wrote to those who did not get a perfect bride. The apostle is quite unwilling to accept the excuse that the problem is due to the wife. He doesn't say that at all. Why? Because no matter how difficult the marriage is, the husband can reveal God's superhuman power and improve the relationship.

I know I have provoked many questions. Let's hope we can address many of them from this passage as we go along. In the end, I hope to get real practical and see if we can bring it down to our lives. Although we might be of different age, culture and language, remember that we all are speaking about an institution that God made and that He has given to us. He in just a few words in Ephesians 5 have directed all husbands with one powerful statement.

### **Different stages of life**

Some of you are not yet married. That is fine. God will give you time to more radically transform you before marriage. Your future wife will be most grateful. But these words have much more to say than address our marriage. This command has three levels, only the first has to do with marriage.

The first level is the most obvious. Husbands should love their wives. If you are a wife, do not wag the finger saying, "Have you met my husband? How do you know what his problem is so well? Has he talked to you?" She might go on and say his problem is being lazy, gambling or like other girls." We will see that this is all and the same root problem. Pray through this seminar that the Almighty love of God would be revealed to him. There are, however, two other levels we will discuss.

If you are a husband, God will want you to make some changes. There is also the level of ministry. If you are a minister, you have many Christians to counsel and properly train. If you are an evangelist, it is here we have a wonderful message for the heathen. They can in Christ find healing for their marriages. But most of all, you should know that this is an invitation to draw closer to God's love.

### ❖ A Prayer

*Lord, come and reveal your mighty love to our poor hearts. Our so-called love is so earthy. It is like a poor muddy stream that only dirties the things it touches. Come, Almighty One, come and refresh us with the streams from heaven. Pour out the mighty love of God in our midst. Reveal the power of the cross before our eyes. Take away our fears, troubles and doubts. Open up us before you and let us never be the same. In Jesus Christ Name I pray, Amen.*

As we study Ephesians 5:25-27, we observe three special instructions. They each form a wall to the building of love. If a house is missing a wall, the house is not steady. We need all three walls. Firstly, we see the command to love, "Husbands love your wives." Then we see the purpose of that love starting with the words, "That He might..." Then we see the ultimate purpose or end goal, that she should be, "Holy and blameless." Let's see how strong your house of love is?

- A. The Command to Love (Ephesians 5:25)
- B. The Purpose of Love (Ephesians 5:26)
- C. The Goal of Love (Ephesians 5:27)

## A. The Command to Love (Ephesians 5:25)

The first command is obvious. We have all heard it, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." There is perhaps nothing new in hearing this command, but we want to point out several challenging thoughts regarding this command to love.

### ❖ The Only Command

First of all, it is the only command that God has given to husbands everywhere. He did not give husbands in America or China different different commands from husbands in India or Egypt. This is, in and of itself, quite remarkable. Nor is there a command for a different age. He does not tell newlyweds one thing and older husbands, say of twenty years of marriage, something else. He gives us all one command.

**Command to Love  
(Ephesians 5:25)**

Providing one command causes us to focus on this one matter. It is like, "If you focus on this one thing, everything will work out in the end." Some of us send our children to school. Most parents do not ask, "How are higher forms of mathematics like algebra going to help my son and daughter?" They just trust it will all work out for the best. We only keep telling our children, "Work hard. Do your studies, and it will be well with you." Parents have a blind trust in education.

When the Lord gave husbands only one command, He was trying to help husbands focus on that one thing. This one thing no longer comes natural. He wants us to know that this is very important. We are not to be distracted. We dare not disobey. To the degree that we do not love our wives we will face serious life consequences. You ask, "What kind of consequences?"

I believe that most of you know by examining your marriage and others, if not now, in the past, wives are specially designed to receive that love. Just as we were made to eat, if we eat less food, we then get thinner. If we eat even less, then we will shed even more weight until we begin to get weak and frail.

If we stop loving our wives, then bad things start happening. Arguments, fights, cold shoulder, distance in relationship, bitter words, struggles, etc. This is the reason all of us men got married, right? Of course not. No one would want to get married if he would only end up with conflict and fights. Do your

remember the words of Proverbs? “It is better to live in a corner of a roof, than in a house shared with a contentious woman” (recorded in two places - Proverbs 21:9; 25:24).

A contentious wife is one which continually critically returns words and statements. The husband quickly gets impatient. The Lord did not give men the option of trading our wives in. Why? Did you ever think that this contentiousness might be because our wives are not getting the love that they need? Yes, it is possible that our wives were contentious from the beginning. If that is so, then it probably means your mother did not receive the love that she was designed by God to receive. We are not excusing this argumentative wife, but only trying to focus on the value and power of that one command to love our wives.

Love is so important because it reassures the wife the you love her. From this attention, faithfulness and affection, she is secure.

If we only have one solution for many problems, we must believe that somehow all the problems are sourced in the lack of that love or at least solved by a greater dose of love. Think of it for a moment. Which wife of ours would not want more love from us? Surely all of them. There is an innate need for this love and affection.

### ❖ More love possible

We also must remember that if there is one command, it is not a one time thing to do. We cannot say, “I loved you when I married you, didn’t I?” “I bought you a house! Didn’t I?” “What about that ring I bought you?” The great King David was a very poor man early in his life. He could not afford a wife, especially Michal, the daughter of King Saul. We can see how much he loved her by the way he did not hold back from the challenge to wipe out 200 men in order to get her. We cannot, however, think that we obey the Lord by loving our wife by a time in the past.

Husbands have the tendency to focus on what they have done for their wives in the past. That is fine, but it will not satisfy the present need for love. Paul did not say, “Make sure you loved her in the past.” Nor did He say, “Love her once a week.” Instead He said, “Love your wives.” In other words, this love is to be constant. There is no time when we are not to love our wives. We might have done well in the past, but that does not mean we can stop loving her for 1 day a week or even 1 hour a day. Once we allow ourselves to think that we would not love her for a certain time, great turmoil develops. What stops the husband in that moment to betray her? We simply are to live in a state of complete devotion to our wives. I think they would like this!

### ❖ Definition of love

So what does love mean? What is it that God has called us to regarding our wives? The Lord did not want us to be confused at this point. For one, we see that Paul describes what he means by love. It is too easy to say that we love our wives. For some men, it means they have married them. For others it might mean that they bring home money and do not gamble or drink it away. For others, it might mean that they do not spend their money on other women. These are great and are part of the commitment that flows out of our love to our wives. But it means much more.

4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous;  
love does not brag and is not arrogant,  
5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own,  
is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,  
6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;  
7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.  
8 Love never fails.

**Love is patient<sup>1</sup>**

**Do I exude a forbearing spirit that enables me to listen and care for those around me?**

Love does not insist on its own schedule and time constraints. People, especially hurt people, can absorb much time. The patient person trusts God with his very limited time.

**Love is kind**

**Am I always nice and caring toward other people?**

Love is kind. We might think this needs not to be said but after a careful examination of what is done in the name of love, we are wise to measure love only with the measuring cup called kindness. If a person is not kind, he simply is not loving.

**Love is not jealous**

**Am I jealous of the attention others get?**

When jealousy springs forth, we must rule out the possibility of love. Some would say that love is jealous because it wants and desires another person. However, true love gives up their right to another person's attention. Love instead commits itself to bringing benefit to the other person.

**Love does not brag**

**Do I tell about my great accomplishments?**

Once a person brags, the object of discussion is despised and seen as a utensil to be used. Bragging exalts oneself and looks down on others. Love requires a person to see good things in others and more often is silent when nothing quickly could be found.

**Love is not arrogant**

**Do I think better of myself than others?**

While bragging speaks of ones accomplishments, arrogance is found in the mind. Arrogance will shed its undesired fruit through glances, attitudes, comments, sleight of hand, and general treatment of others. Love prefers the respect of others over ones selfish desires.

**Love does not act unbecomingly**

**Do I act strangely to attract the attention of others?**

Unbecoming ways are ones in which they oddly attract attention to themselves. Odd or rude behavior attracts the notice of other people. Drawing attention to ourselves is the opposite to love where we would draw attention to the people in need. We focus on others.

**Love does not seek its own,**

**Do I seek the things that I like more than the things others like?**

When we seek our own welfare, we upset our ability to love. Love is seeking the welfare of others. If we prefer ourselves, then we will give ourselves preferential treatment. We will even lie, cheat, backbite, slander, etc. to serve our own needs.

**Love is not provoked**

**How do we respond to those who trouble us?**

True love is not easily shaken. Pretend love quickly changes its position. It is unable to live by principle when he lives for himself. We are in some way inconvenienced when provoked. Our pride is at least attacked. Love's determination is not changed.

**Love does not take into account a wrong suffered,**

**Do I quickly forgive others and refuse bitterness?**

---

<sup>1</sup> These are taken from the Godly Man on "God's Almighty Love."

Love does not get bitter. Wounded, hurt and mistreated it might be, but love will always forgive. She does not store up memories of wrong or plan for revenge. Love wipes the account of wrongs each day to enable her to keep caring for the needs of others.

**Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness,**

**Do I delight in virtual sensuality or violence?**

Whether we or others engage in evil behavior, those with a true loving heart will never rejoice. We see delight in the evil behavior of others. They think they are innocent because of it, but virtual delight in evil is association with it. Love is not present there.

**Love rejoices with the truth;**

**Do I like applause and try to impress people or welcome the truth?**

Love might be humbled by the truth but it still finds its deepest allegiance is for the truth. Love is not preferential to a person so that it will thwart the truth. Love's companion is truth where the light shines brightly and lies and unfaithfulness are broken apart.

**Love bears all things**

**What difficult things have I braved so far in my life that I might continue to love?**

Easily provoked refers to little trifles in personal conflict such as in sibling or marriage relationships. By bearing all things, love can withstand the great shocks of rudeness, sin and absolute depravity. Out of the muddy waters comes the white lily flower.

**Love believes all things**

**Am I able to look to God for help, strength and renewal for each difficult situation I meet?**

This is not referring to today's toleration or ecumenism, but its innocent approach to life and people. She is protected from the pessimism of the age and enabled to treat each person full of respect and hope.

**Love hopes all things**

**Do I treat each relationship and person with hope despite its ugly past?**

Love is not blind utopia but following from her faith, she is able to look ahead at the special opportunities that each relationship brings each day. She lives in the hope of God that God's grace can yet shine into the darkest places.

**Love endures all things**

**What things do I prize and am unwilling to give up?**

Love endures because God's love in Christ has endured. Our love in itself is limited but when God's love fills us, then nothing can stop it. God's love endures shame, reproach, evil, humility just as God's love in Christ pursued all these things so that we could receive that love.

**Love never fails**

**Am I confident of God's final penetrating love?**

There are no periods with God's love. God's love does not stop with the sunset or begin with the new week. Divine love will always continue throughout time and eternity. In the darkest of nights, there will always be the eternal light of God's love. Love will outshine hatred and penetrate the most vile evil with sacrifice.

In this example of the Gospel, we find that Christ totally devoted Himself to loving someone who did not deserve His love. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." His commitment did not depend on the reaction of God's people to Him, but on His determination to extend His love to the church in obedience to God the Father. Let me describe this love in three ways. These are ways that we husbands are to love our wives.

### **a) Unconditional love**

We are to love our wives at all times even when they do not deserve it. God's love in Christ is unconditional in the fullest sense of the word. His love was not dependent on a good or proper response to Him from His people. Love rides on the back of grace. One might describe His people as the most inappropriate people for Him to show His favor towards. The scriptures even call us 'dead in our sins' (Ephesians 2:1), totally unresponsive to Him. Mankind was too absorbed in grabbing what he wanted to recognize or respond to the Lord's love. When we translate this life principle over to marriage, we realize that we husbands, and men in general, need to live by principle rather than by feeling or situation. We do what we are called to do—regularly and constantly love our wives.

Unconditional, no strings attached type of love results in long-term marriages because it is not dependent on how the wife may respond to the husband at any given moment. It seems that the Lord has given husbands a special monthly test during a wife's period where wives often get cranky and critical. Does our kindness vary during these times? When our wives get insecure, afraid, worry or concerned about things that we are not at all interested in, maybe such things as decoration or what people will think, does our commitment to be patient, kind, loving vary at all? There will be no time or situation that he will not forgive her. He will always forgive her. We will be tempted to just react, but God is giving us opportunity at these times to show God's great love to our wives. He allows these times to arise so that He can powerfully transform our wives through our love.

### **b) Compassionate love**

Compassionate love is only one way of describing God's tenderness, mercy, grace, kindness and goodness toward us in Christ. God did not send a Savior who, out of a sense of duty only, performed great noble acts of love. Instead, we find the Savior to be gentle, one who identified with our needs. Again, the call as husbands, is to extend the unequivocal goodness of God to our wives through our compassionate actions, thoughts, words and attitudes.

Husbands must go beyond providing food and shelter only. These things are good. He might even make personal sacrifices for the home. God's love, however, will go deeper by shaping his relationship with his wife. He will speak with kind words. He will have a gentle caring touch. He will be patient when misunderstood or even wrongly accused of sin. He will genuinely be concerned with her rather than just having things done in time and in order.

### **c) Devoted love**

A husband's love is also to be a devoted love. God's love for us in Christ was this way. A devoted love reveals a priority of kind action despite the challenges and distractions of life. We see this devotion on the night before Jesus' death. "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

Jesus asked if there was any other way to fulfill God's purpose. His highest priority, however, was not to escape discomfort, displeasure, embarrassment, shame, sharp pain, rejection, mocking, injustice and finally death, but to devotedly give Himself for the sake of His future bride—the church.<sup>2</sup>

A husband's devotion to his wife must be fixed and unchanging. By prioritizing his care for his wife, even in view of possible danger or suffering, he reflects the devotion that God has toward us. Abraham did the opposite when he gave up his wife to the king. He was afraid that he would be killed so his beautiful wife could be taken. It is true that he might first be killed and then she be taken. That might be so, but let us in this case not follow Abraham but instead be eternally known that we loved our wives as ourselves.

---

<sup>2</sup>The example of Jesus shines in contrast to the feebleness of the disciples where every last one turned aside from the possible negative consequences of being associated with Jesus. Just scan Luke 22 to see this.

Our delight in our wives must not be focused on her beauty or joy in the relationship (though these things are nice), but on our commitment to care for her. This is what makes the wedding vow so powerful. The husband is making a commitment to be devoted to his wife whether in sickness or health, poverty or wealth.

I just attended the memorial service for a good faithful brother in the church. He set a wonderful example of faithfulness for our congregation. His wife, because of some disease, was not very coherent and needed assistance in her wheelchair. Each week he would bring her to church. He would carry her wheelchair up the church stairs and then assist her. Although he missed out on many an opportunities to spend time with others over the years, since his retirement he devoted himself to caring for her. This was God's devoted love given to a man to grant to his wife.

Our wives know when we are devoted to them because of our simple commitment to love them because we are committed to love them.

**This is the secret.** God designed the husband to take the initiative in bringing a constant shower of unconditional love and kindness to his wife. In the same way, God brings to His people a constant flow of love towards our life. Never is there a time when we should question His love for us.

“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself” (Ephesians 5:28).

### ❖ The Choice of Love

Love is the supreme choice. A man has two possible responses to God's love through Jesus Christ. He can accept it or reject it. He can be influenced by God's love or shun it. If we embrace His love and determine to love, we love. When we refuse His love, then our response is shaped by our own will, desires or social expectations.

#### Three kinds of love

The Greek has three words for our English word for 'love.' Only agape love is a love that gives even when it gets nothing in return. Agape love responds to the responsibility to meet the needs of others regardless of the situation. What kind of love does your marriage run on?

Love: Three Greek words	<i>Agape</i>	<i>Philia</i>	<i>Eros</i>
Description	Unconditional love	Social love	Passionate love
Mindset	Loves because of commitment	Loves as one is loved	Loves to get loved
Motivation	Motivated by God's command and other's need.	Motivated by expectations of others	Motivated by self pleasure
Heart	Willing to make sacrifices	Tries to make an even trade-off	Willing to sacrifice others

The New Testament uses the Greek word *agape* to describe God's gracious love that in turn should drive the husband to consistently love his wife. He doesn't love everyone with that devotion. He commits himself to love his wife. The Greek word *eros* describes a passionate love often used in sexual contexts (note the derived English word 'erotic'). *Philia* on the other hand describes a trade-off love, "You are nice to me, and I am nice to you." We see this kind of love happening in families and with friends.

## **Marriages built on three kinds of love**

### **1. Marriage built on lust**

The lust-oriented excitement that an *eros* marriage provides fades very quickly. Those who base their marriage on sexual desire will soon look elsewhere for more excitement. Once offenses build up, it is no longer possible to have fun at home.

### **2. Marriage built on expected kindness**

*Philia* love wears thin very quickly too. If my spouse is mean to me, should I return the meanness? Where does it end? If the way I respond to my spouse is dependent on how they treat me, then there will be a slow movement toward death. Because of our sin nature, we need a love that is not dependent on how the other person responds to us.

### **3. Marriage built on covenant love**

Covenant love, *agape* love, agrees to love because of the commitment we make to our wives. We love because we are supposed to. Of course, our love's source is God Himself. Christ loved us first. That brought love into the world. The clearer the husband can commit himself to this enduring love, the stronger that love gets. This love can also be seen in the Old Testament in the word 'lovingkindness' (Hebrew *hesed*). It is a covenant love. I love because I am committed to love.

Love is such an important fabric to their lives, that our wives will stiffen and harden up without that love. This is the reason that God has only given one command to the husband regarding his wife. Much more could be said but compared to everything else nothing really matters. She thrives on love and without it she dies.

Genuine love is able to transform the worst of us. Love is most desired by everyone. Love is not as the world thinks about it, as whimsical or sexual, but quite the opposite: fixed, purposed and deliberate. Husbands, we have the opportunity of the future ahead of us. We cannot change the past. We can by God's grace escape many failures of the past through the road of forgiveness. But having that forgiveness, we can change how things are going to operate from here on. As we look into these verses, we will begin to see the almost magical character of love. Remember, however, that if you choose not to love, then you will have no other way to rescue your marriage or bring it to its ultimate place in life. Only through love will God transform what the world sees as a typical marriage into a glorious representations of Christ and the church.

## **Summary**

When our love is unconditional, compassionate and devoted, our wives know this. It reaches deep down inside them, and they begin to change. This kind of love is too powerful for them. It is the love of God being brought right to the door of our wives' hearts each day. When our wives look into our eyes, they know we genuinely love them.

Wives will still go through times of misunderstanding, doubt and criticism, but because there is a deep layer of love over their hearts, they snap back quickly. They are able to catch themselves with thoughts like, "I might feel he doesn't love me, but he does. Why do I feel like this?"

Husbands do not naturally have this unconditional, compassionate and devoted love. This is only received by exposing our needy lives before the Living God. We must plead that His love would freely flow

to our wives through our feeble lives. We must confess that we cannot do it on our own. But we can and must follow through on our commitment to express this holy love. God can strengthen us.

I have personally discovered that the more I simply focus on my commitment to love my wife as Christ loved me, that life becomes easier. I am better able to jump over other temptations because I am no longer deliberating over whether I should forgive or help out. I identify my purpose in life with loving my wife. Most of the battles rage because we have not made that commitment. We have taken the marriage vows, but I recommend that you renew your commitment to love your wife as one of your main purposes in life.

➔ Do you resent your wife for anything that she has done or not done? Can you easily forgive?

## B. The Purpose of Love (Ephesians 5:26)

<sup>25</sup> *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word” Ephesians 5:25-26).*

When a husband begins to really love his wife, he will be challenged by his purpose. He will need to ask himself, “Why am I doing this?” In this case, he will ask, “Should I love my wife after what she just said to me?” or “Why should I love my wife?” These questions are important. Often we do not notice them. If we want to love our wives we need to be alert to how these thoughts influence our minds and choices. If we want to be a man of God that withstands temptations, we must be more committed and focused. Love in the end is a host of kind and gracious decisions.<sup>3</sup>

**Purpose of Love  
(Ephesians 5:26)**

As we identify the wrong things that we are thinking, then we can correct them with the Word of God. Paul has said that in the process of putting off the old and putting on the new, we need to have anew mindset.

*That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Ephesians 4:22-24).*

This renewing of our minds comes about as we place the scriptures to the forefront of our minds. We allow the scriptures to influence our values and even our thoughts. As it does, we change our attitudes to different situations and treat people differently. This sanctifying process goes on and on through our Christian lives. This is how we get to love our wives as we ought. John has said that it is the young men who have overcome the evil one because of the Word of God. “I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (1 John 2:14).

The process is important but it follows the purpose. This is what Paul focuses on in this verse. Notice here how Christ loved the church that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. We are not Jesus, but we are commanded to love our wives just as Christ loved the church. So what does it meant to “sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word?” Let’s first understand what it meant for Christ and then we can better understand what it means for us as husbands in the context of our marriage.

### ❖ Jesus’ love for the church

There are two phrases comprising Ephesians 4:26. The purpose is clearly defined as sanctifying her. The process is then spoken of in the following phrase in the following words. Let us look a bit more at this.

<sup>3</sup> I have another source that speaks very specifically to this issue of temptation.  
[http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/AnxietyOA/OA06/OA06\\_01.html](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net/Topics/AnxietyOA/OA06/OA06_01.html)

Jesus' purpose for loving the church and dying for her was that she might be sanctified unto Him. Perhaps it will clarify things if we think of the way that a man will pay a dowry for his bride. But in this case, in order to free his much beloved to-be bride, he had to die to rescue her. In the traditional story, this would be a most tragic story. However, with Jesus, it works. How? He came alive. He did die, and yet he is alive to lead and cherish her.

There is a clear understanding that through what Christ did for the church set her apart in a special way before God (i.e. sanctified her). The concept of holiness in scripture, both OT and NT is designated purpose. We can see this in the way the apostle calls his disciples as saints in Ephesians 1:1.

Now the verse goes on and explains how the church has become set aside as Christ's bride, "*having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.*" This no doubt speaks of the special cleansing and preparation ceremonies that a bride often has to go through, especially when marrying a king. When my daughter married, she had many special preparations. Esther 2:12 describes it like this, "Now when the turn of each young lady came to go in to King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women--for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and the cosmetics for women."

The bride is set apart as a chaste bride for Christ. "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin" (2 Corinthians 11:2). As a church, this alludes to our time on earth while we prepare ourselves for Him. We wait in anticipation. We ready ourselves for Him by our good works. When Christ comes again, we are wedded to Him. At this time we are betrothed to Him.

How does this process happen? How does Christ purify His people? He does this through the washing of the water of the word. There are different understandings of these words, but it seems that what happens is that God speaks to His people through His Word and causes changes to happen in their lives. 1 John 2:14 says, "You are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one." In Ephesians 6:17 Paul says, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Jesus says, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth" in John 17:17.

What this all means is that through the Word of God He nurtures faith, hope and love in His people. We are not quite ready for the big wedding day. We need to be readied. I can think of many circumstances where God through His Word caused a faith to grow in me which allowed me to make decisions that pleased Him. Some are quite significant and life impacting while most of them are small and almost incidental. It happens each day as I meet with Him.

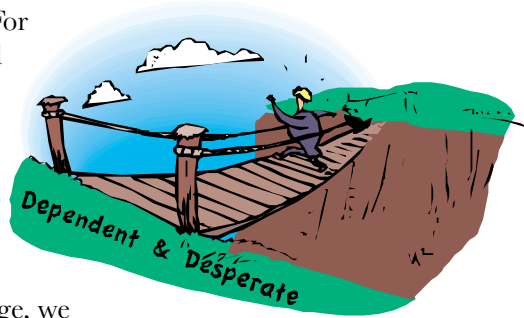
Maybe I am thinking about this fellow pastor. I sense a jealous spirit in me. I want evil for him. But I catch my thoughts and see their demonic source. I pledge myself to love and treasure this brother. What a difference this renewing of the mind makes in the way that we treat one another. If I was not challenged by God's Word, "love is not jealous" (1 Corinthians 13:4), then I would think evil of this brother. What a difference. Christ is purifying us. His Word brings us into special encounters with Him and allows us to know what we should and should not do.

Let me give you another example. Maybe I am reading about Christ's dying on the cross in Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). I pause a moment and reflect what God wants to speak to me through this passage. I wait for Him and talk to Him about the passage. He then suddenly puts someone on my mind, a relationship I have someone. It is not too good. Maybe it is my wife. She said some things in an offensive way and our relationship is not as warm as it could be. I know the Lord wants me to forgive as He has forgiven me. So I forgive her and decide on a practical way to show her how special she is to me like buying flowers. Our relationship becomes so much better all so quickly through the way God worked through the Word of God.

## ❖ A Husband's Love for his wife

In the same way, when a man marries his wife, she is set aside for him. Her life rotates largely around him and his purposes. "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24). The husband leaves his own parents jurisdiction and sets up a new family. He then becomes devoted to her. He is to 'cleave' to her, hold on to her tightly.

Let us picture a hand holding onto something. The degree the hand holds onto something, the more important it is to him. For example, if we were walking over a big cement bridge, we might put our hand on some rail, but it is not very needed. But if we were to walk over a wooden plank bridge, then we would hold on to the rail tightly as the bridge sways back and forth.



Remember we are not just thinking of how Christ loved the church, but also on how we are to love our wives. Husbands are to play the same role as Christ to the church. We do not want to be dogmatic in what this specifically means. He has shown us what it means for Christ to us God's Word to build up the believer. Husbands must think of their purpose to be devoted in his wife in such a way that she is nurtured from his words and actions. God interacts with His people through His Word. Husbands through their speech also impact their wives. We should more often think about this. Let me give an example although we will see this developed more in the next point.

When a man loves his woman, he says all sorts of things to her that inspire and encourage her. She wants to be his wife because of his affection for her. He wins her heart. The same is true after marriage. The husband through his words and ways fosters this trust in his special love and devotion to her or strips away from it. For example, and this is a simple example. She cooks a meal for her husband. She has done what is proper. That is her responsibility. He could just ignore her, or say some words that help her know how appreciated she is in the home. We do not need to limit this to cooking but a host of other things that God does through her to make our lives special.

When I think of my wife's devotion to our children in their education (our family homeschools), their caring of their special needs or just the way she cares about me, they all deeply stir my heart. I tell her how much she means to me. She loves it when I specifically say what I like about her. On the other hand, if I don't mention it. I am busy. I like my work and of course am glad for my family. She turns a light on for me when I get back late. She waits for me at times. But if I do not acknowledge my appreciation, she wonders if I really care for her. Maybe she thinks she is just another servant.

The Lord is building us up with His Word each day. We need to build up and nurture our wives each day too. Our love should reveal this special appreciation. Why? We want to assure our wife that she is more special to us than anyone. Men usually take their wives for granted. They do not express their appreciation. Overall, they are usually more quiet and communicate with their wives very little besides basic necessities. Our words and actions are the very means that we build up trust in our wives so that they can better trust us. (I will explain in a moment how that trust works into the picture).

### ➔ Workshop

So let's pause here and evaluate how well we do on allowing God through His Word sanctify us.

- Do you listen to the Lord each day? What does He say to you?

These questions reveal whether we have learned how special His building up of our lives has been. The more we have learned from our times with Him, the more we are apt to spend times expressing to our wives those things that make them appreciative. "We love because He first loved us." If we have not learned to carefully spend time with the Lord but rush on with our own lives, we will have a rude shock

ahead of us. First of all, the Lord will let us run until we fall flat with our face in the mud. This is not how we do Christian ministry. Instead like Moses we spend time before His presence seeking His power, His love, His direction and His presence. (We have a whole seminar on this topic).<sup>4</sup>

- Do you purpose to build up and nurture your wife as He does to you? Share how you do or do not.

Without this purposed nurturing of our wives, our marriage will at best be mediocre and more than likely filled with mistrust and argument. And with most men this love has to be deliberate. This is why it is a command. At first this kind of love, courtesy, noticing the special things she does, etc., will come very difficult. But afterwards, one will get more used to it.

You might complain that is not how your culture or family does it. If this is true, then no doubt your marriage is nothing more than a mediocrity family. Why not change the pattern as the Lord has commanded you? What do you have to lose especially when you consider it is the Lord's command? The Lord really loves us and goes out of His way to express that love and nurture us through His word.<sup>5</sup> Let us remember that the command is given because it is easily overlooked. And knowing myself and other men, this is ever so true.

- Do you cling to her? Is she your only focus?

The scriptures record God telling man how he should treat his wife. "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24). I wonder how many of us actually allow our eyes to stray to others. Our hearts will go where our eyes go.

God has had to do a lot of work in this area of my life. I am most humbled by the way I used to be hooked on pornography. It was wretched. Trying to get out but always brought back. I will explain in the next marriage talk more on how God saved me from this, but the key is wanting not to let your eyes and mind stray into another area.

One of the things that helps is the clarification of what is and is not acceptable. Jesus says that all such thoughts are adultery. "Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'" (Matthew 5:26-27). Once we know the evil, we have nowhere to go but to repentance. We cannot say that a little thinking of another woman that God has not given you is permissible. It is adultery. And unless you and I turn from this, our faith is empty.

God has since been gracious to show me a powerful truth here. When I focus my heart on my wife, even in her difficult times, (for isn't this our greatest times of temptation?), then my affection grows for her. I have made a commitment to love my wife. That will be one major etching on my tombstone by God's grace to summarize my life. This perspective and inner commitment has allowed me to grow in my love for her and God more than anything over the last ten years or so.

If we ever going to love our wives as we ought, then we have to live for higher purposes than just having a happy marriage or trouble free marriage. We do not love to get but to bring a blessing to another. Each husband needs to make it a prime objective of his life to love his wife. In other words, we are so committed to our wives, that even if our wives never changed for the better, we would still love them. True love has to view beyond one's own needs or desires. Otherwise Jesus would not have died in our place. What is that purpose in this case?

---

<sup>4</sup> Renewing Our Lives through God's Word.

[http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforFREEDOM.net/Topics/ADT/Courses/3Day/Schedules/1\\_Renewal.html](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforFREEDOM.net/Topics/ADT/Courses/3Day/Schedules/1_Renewal.html)

<sup>5</sup> The Greek word for 'word' in Ephesians 5:26 is '*rhema*,' which emphasizes not the written word but the word that comes alive as we sense His word to us. He takes the Word of God and it becomes '*rhema*' when it becomes alive and applicable to our lives. We instantly see this happen when we feel built up by His *rhema*.

I would continue on here but I do not need to. The Lord Himself through Paul's words takes us one step further! Let us look to Ephesians 5:27.

## C. The Goal of Love (Ephesians 5:27)

*“That He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.” (Ephesians 5:27).*

We might have been challenged already with what we have heard. But that is only the beginning! Get ready. There is more. We talked about being purposed in nurturing our wives. For most of us, this is something that is quite unfamiliar. We expect our wives to be good, kind and obedient. But perhaps we have never thought about the normal means by which our wives are to be built up to be good, kind and obedient. We just think it is their responsibility. It is, but we have a significant part here. This is the major point of this verse.

**Goal of Love  
(Ephesians 5:27)**

What if my wife is being unsupportive regarding some matter. Perhaps we differ on some aspect of educating our children or even on having children. They distanced themselves from us and refused to talk and got quite moody. Of course, we usually forget to share how we shouted at them or refused to listen to what they were trying to say, not to mention that we used some rude words to describe our precious wife. We are willing to endure this blast from our wives for days to prove we were right. Our marriage, however, is not so close and intimate. Each spouse puts up with the other. Each of them blame the other for the trouble. (Be careful for it is here that temptation is the hardest to fight).

I was so saddened by one of our church members who went to Papua New Guinea to help work in a hospital out in a tribal area. She shared several times within just a number of weeks time span that she had to treat women with ‘chop, chop.’ Do you know what she meant by that? She meant that a husband literally got a knife and cut their wives’ fingers off. Do you know why? Usually it was because of some minor thing regarding how the food was cooked or that she had forgotten something. Here is the wife with her fingers cut off with blood pouring out, never will be able to serve like before. This was a physical attack, but the emotional attack upon her well-being strikes much deeper. Could she ever believe that her husband could be trusted and respected?

Perhaps the wife was not being so considerate or thoughtful, but if this is the case, I want to show us how to get over this problem and begin to solve it in a totally revolutionary and effective way. We might not get immediate results, but over all, we will see a most delightful change in our wives over time. In order for us to be able to do this, we must be goal-oriented. Let me describe the importance of goals and the reason they help us do what we otherwise could not.

### ❖ Getting the Goal

A goal is the end of the road. It is where we want to go to. Think about this seminar. Some of you have traveled five hours to get here. Some have crossed dangerous rivers and endured all sorts of things. You do this for the gospel's sake and for other reasons too. The point is that you endured all the struggles through the five hours of traveling in order to accomplish some greater goal. Without the goal, there is no reason to endure all these things. I travel more than 36 hours to get to some places so that I can share God's Word with them. I endure all sorts of things. But these things become bearable when I remember the glorious work and calling of the Lord. I have great expectations that the Lord will work through His Word. You have done the same things. Some have even endured persecution. We have a greater hope that keeps us going.



Goals, then, enable us to accomplish what otherwise would be impossible because we have a hope of some greater thing being accomplished. We men need this in our marriage. Some of us start off as non-Christians with wives who are from non-Christian families without any grace of the Lord. Others have Christian wives, but they are not well trained. Our wives then, each of them, have different problems. Some spend too much money. Some don't listen to their husbands. Some are stubborn. Others argue. Others are plain lazy. When we marry, our wife is somewhere along a line of growth. If we look at where she is, we will get quite discouraged. We are apt to focus on her failures. And worse, we criticize her for not moving ahead. We use harsh words to blame them for the problem. We blame them for the problem, but is it true that we had no part in it? Isn't the Lord implying in these verses that we are responsible for these problems if we are not providing the love that He speaks of. Don't we have a part of the failure.

Our unwillingness to accept blame greatly expands the problem. If we think they are the full reason of the problem, we can easily justify our accusations, we will extenuate our anger and rage and lastly we will not see any fault in ourselves so that we cannot or will not change. We men do not like to confess our problems, but do we not put our wives into a hard spot by not being willing to see how we could do things better? The problem is a bit harder to recognize than we think.

We will say that the problem is all theirs. We will say, "Show me what I have done wrong." When our wives hear this, they cannot respond. We just use their lack of response to justify our accusation. But we couldn't be more wrong. Just because our wives might not be able to think clearly through the problem, it does not mean that we are free from guilt. The Lord has already told us to love our wives which means we should not shout, accuse or otherwise meanly treat them. But notice that our Lord did not say, "Do not treat your wives too harshly or meanly." What did He say, "Love your wives."

I now believe that when a husband sacrificially loves his wife, that many of our marital difficulties just fade away. Our wives would do anything for us if they just knew we really cared for them. But they often do not know this because it is not true. Other religions talk about not mistreating one's wife, but only Christ has come out saying that we should love one another including our wives.

The reason I believe this is partially through my study in the Word of God, partially through this set of verses and partially through my own experience. I have been married almost thirty years and have seen my wife transformed before my eyes. The key has been to see that the most significant changes have come about when I myself have begun to learn more about what this love really means. I will share with you a few illustrations in a moment, but we need to look more carefully at what God's Word says here.

### ❖ The Starting Point

The starting point is God's love for us. Life turns around for us when our eyes are opened to the love of God for us. Remember that Paul here is not only writing about Christ's love for the church but also the husband's love for the wife. Verse 25 says "just as Christ..."

So let us again think about Christ's love and then turn about and think about the husband's love for his wife. The interesting thing is that the Lord cared about us at all! We earlier spoke of the selfish or immature nature of our wives. But where did the Lord start with us? He started with Ephesians 2:1-3.

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Ephesians 2:1-3).*

Do you see what the Lord has done. We were not lovely when He saved us. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He died for the sinners. Remember His disciples? They all left Him. “ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” We were no different than the world. When we understand the point of these verses, then we can begin to accept God’s grace for our lives and for others.

Do you think the Lord chose you because you were holy? Indeed not. “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love” Ephesians 1:4). He chose us that we would be holy and blameless. We were treated ever so kindly by our Lord.

Why did the Lord choose to be so gracious to us and treat us so much better than we deserved? His motivation was not fixed on rewarding us but on being kind and good to us. He made a commitment to love us and so He loves us despite our failures, laziness, impurity and covetous hearts. If God allowed judgment to come upon us, we would be driven into the ground and then into hell. Instead He had the big nails driven into the hands and feet of Jesus on the cross and take our sins away.

The Lord knows that our wives are full of spots, wrinkles and such undesirable things and yet He, our Lord and Master, has called us to embark on a journey like Himself. We are to thoroughly love our wives no matter what. You see, our responses are not dictated on how nice they are or not, whether they are attentive to our needs or not. Maybe we want our wives to be less selfish or not critical. It would be great. I have, however, taught myself to think, “But am I not so selfish like that sometimes to you, Lord? Have I not been that way myself?”

I wonder personally can grow in our own Christian lives and service. Sure it would be great if my wife was such and such, but she is not. But that is inconsequential. When the Lord looks at you and me, He does not care about the outward but the inward.

*But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7).*

What does the Lord see in our hearts? Are there spots, wrinkles and all sorts of impurities? Do we look lustfully at other women? Do we say to ourselves, “I wish I had that wife.” We sometimes have actually rejected our wives in our heart because of some certain unpleasant words or incidents. We have chosen not to love them. There is some aspect of her that has become intolerable.

### ➔ Workshop

- Let us pause and reflect on this matter. Have you turned your heart against your wife?

Can you see that you have done exactly opposite than the Lord has said? Are you willing now to confess your sin and stop focusing on your wife’s faults. No matter what she did or is like, you will forgive her with the grace the Lord has treated you.

- Have you desired other women?

Maybe you have tried to stop looking at other women but could not help it. First, you need to admit that you have committed adultery, whether it be physically or in your heart. You need to repent. Second, you need to apologize to your wife for your unfaithfulness. You should have loved her but did not. Lastly, decide in your heart that you will only put your affection on her. Make that quiet commitment in your heart. Tell yourself that this is what is going to characterize you no matter how difficult. Until you have put your heart wholly on your wife, you will never get out of that trap. Say a prayer like this only make it personal.

*O Lord, how I have grieved you. My sin is before you. You give me one command regarding my wife, but I have done quite the opposite. Instead of focusing on my responsibility to love, I have treated her ever so terribly. No wonder she has hardened herself. I made her worse, Lord. I have sinned against her. Lord please forgive me. Come and restore me. I now pledge myself to love my wife with all the spots, wrinkles and other things. You have given me the opportunity to join you in loving her as you loved me. Even if the world never sees that love, I want her to know that I supremely love her. I now take all my affection and place it on her. Please let me love her as you have loved and forgiven me. In Jesus Christ's Name I pray, Amen.*

### ❖ Commitment to the Goal

We need to start out with that kind of dedication, but the dedication will not help us be very consistent unless we focus on what else the Lord has done here. We had talked about the Lord's purpose of loving us and sanctifying ourselves for him. He loved us so that we would love Him. We are to do the same. Notice how much further He goes in verse 27. *"That He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless."* Ephesians 5:27).

It is amazing. We have spoken about from where He has taken us. Our roots are in the world but our destination is heaven. The Lord has a clear purpose for us. He is shaping our lives so that we might shine in His glory. This means that He works with us through all sorts of issues in life so that we might put off our sin and participate in the good works that He has given to us. We might have started with a lot of spots, wrinkles and blemishes, but He has purposed to work in our hearts so that we can be presented before Him in all glory.

Notice how the end goal had enabled Him to endure all that pain and suffering in the cross. The goal keeps the Lord right now interceding on our behalf. He is rallying for us. He wants us to win. That is why He came.

He of course does not like it when we sin. But He does not utterly reject us. He warns us, reproves us, holds us back and finally in the end, if necessary, He chastises us. **"FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."** Hebrews 12:6). We can never escape His eyes. He is looking not at who we pretend to be, but who we really are. The Lord doesn't just cast us aside because of our imperfections. No. The Lord has a great goal of presenting the church in all her glory. Now let us translate this back into our marriages.

The point is that God has called me to perpetually be devoted to the building up of my wife. My goal is not to have a good marriage. I need a higher goal that will reach beyond there. Our goal is to build up our wife. If that is the case, then we have an infinite patience even for the most foolish or stubborn wife.

We must note here that we ought to have a deep confidence in the process. The process is simple. When a husband loves his wife, she begins to find that security and comfort deep within. Woman love being loved and cherished. In return, she is able to begin to trust her husband more and more. When the husband does something that she doesn't think is right, because of her trust in him, she is much less apt to question him or withdraw from him. Even if she does go through a critical time because of that time of the month, she can much more quickly snap out of it.

A deep and growing love rightly builds up trust and the wife is quite willing to submit her will. She still needs to grow in that area like us all, but it becomes something obvious. Notice again, that when the husband provides that kind of love the wrinkles and spots are taken away. When we marry our wife, we also import all her problems into our home. If she gossips, our home will be troubled. If she is not a hard worker, than our home will suffer the effects. Sometimes one finds that our wives have different ideas about what we should or should not do with our children. The effect is the same. If she knows her husband really loves her, she is not so stubborn. She will much less frequently say, "He does not listen to me." Why? Because he does. I want to share one more important aspect.

## ❖ **Treasuring our wives' growth**

We as husbands need to reach deeper into our hearts to gain a pure love for our wives. The greater the love, the more profound the effects upon our wives. The question is how do we grow in love as husbands for our wives? I would suggest that we focus on a few questions.

- Do I treasure my wife's person?

The first things we must search is whether we really treasure her. Jesus said that where one's treasure is, so there will be his heart. This can apply to marriage too. If we are really fond of our wives, then we will treasure her. But you might ask, "She is okay, but not that special." Start with being honest and then look to the Lord for grace to begin to treasure her. Look for ways to compliment her. Then start praying for her according to the goals that we have. You will discover when you start praying for her, your heart will start to grow more fond. Lastly, we should commit ourselves to a long term plan (life-long) through God's grace to build up and nurture your wife.

I have found numerous times when I was starting to get frustrated, angry or feeling self-pity, that if I just apply myself to think of her in these ways, I quickly put aside my problem. This is because I focus on caring and nurturing her. I will do those special things that she likes.

Through the years I have seen her conquer some severe problems. One problem she had, and I have asked permission to share this, was your victory over worry. I would not understand her worry. This is something she learned from her Mom. Things might seem fine but she could just worry about it. It would hold her back. When God began to deal with me deeper in these areas, she also began to change. I believe it is simply because my love focused more on her. I really saw how special she was to me.

Early in my life I faced a lot of problems with pornography. Later in marriage, I came to realize that my devotion to my wife was not complete or full. I was too tempted with evil pictures. I would allow myself to watch impure movies. I found that if I delighted in those pictures of another, then I could not delight in my wife. So I have had to limit what I watch or look at. But every step I took in this area brought about more and more reward in our relationship.

If I treasure her, then she will delight me. Even if I am frustrated by her, I can gain joy in the way that I am seeking to nurture her. She loves that. The Lord loves that. And I find great delight in doing God's will.

- Do I value her opinions? (what she thinks and values)

One aspect to loving our wives is to value their opinions. I have been mistaken what this means and want to share that with you. The Lord wants to hear from His people. He wants us to pray. God loves His people and values their concerns to such a degree that He says that He will give us anything we ask in His name. Are we always right? Why would He hear whatever we say? There are those things that are not in His will that He refuses to do but we should see that overall He really does mean what He says. We only do not believe it. In any case, it is a great model to the way we as husbands should seek wisdom and insight from our wives.

I know we are the head of the family. But does that mean we should not gain from their insight and feelings? No. This is where we often go wrong. The husband is the authority, but this does not mean he does not learn from her. Jesus goes far beyond this. He does not need our wisdom to discern what is best. But why does He want to work through us? The reason is that He wants us to share in the honor of doing what is right. When God made Adam and Eve, He gave them dominion over the earth. In other words, God gave them the power direct things on earth.

So when we think about our wives, we must not only think of them even for insight and wisdom. That in and of itself should make it so that we want to get their input in our lives. But the Lord shows us that by working with their decision we are able to work together and accomplish even more. The head of

the home does not mean I make all the decisions but that I am responsible for the decisions being made. The head of the home does not mean that I cannot or should not gain input from others.

God made the wife the helpmate. Does this not mean that somehow she is to enhance the rule of the man? If he does not gain her input, then it seems quite reasonable that he will miss out on some important thoughts and warnings. Even Herod's wife had a nightmare warning King Herod about how he should not have Jesus killed. If this is true for the pagan, is it not true for us as God's people. Peter says, "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." 1 Peter 3:7). She is to be honored. She too has God's grace. Again the husband is responsible for the decisions. He does not need to follow her advice but he should certainly take heed to it.

I look at it this way. One teacher has said that God communicates things to our family only through the wife. We know that the evil one can also bring wrong suggestions to the minds of our wives. We have to discern them. So I try to listen to God through my wife. I think this is what it means give her honor and treat her as a fellow heir of grace. God speaks to her too. When the Spirit of God filled His people, it says, "I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17). If God has decided to speak through our wives, then we are the fools if we ignore them.

As a result, I talk and listen to my wife. We actually sit down and have conversations together. I try to find out where she is at in her life and what problems she faces. Her perspective is different than mine as a female, wife and mother. Her concerns are different and so this helps me temper my own responses and take action that otherwise I would miss.

What happens as a result? Do you think she likes this? Sure, she does. She knows she is valued when I am tuning into her life. She might get upset if I do not agree with her, but it does not turn into an argument. Why? Because she knows I have at least really listened to her. And more than this, I value her input.

- Handling differences

In fact, I do something else. Because I believe God speaks through my wife to me. When I disagree with her, I slow way down and ask myself (and sometimes her), "Why does she differ with me on this?" The main thing, as I see it, is not that we agree but that I understand why she is saying something. I want to know her values. Her conclusion might be wrong, but what is engendering her suggestions. By getting down to her motives for different suggestions, I can be released to not get agitated and upset, even if she is being somewhat forceful with her words and not as gentle as she should be. Instead I keep asking why is she saying this. Sometimes it is because of fears or worries. This shows me and her that her suggestions are probably off. She is also helped to focus on having the Lord overcome her fears. On the other hand, it might be some concern for a certain child over his or her welfare. I find that sometimes I totally forget about this one need of the child. Without this input however, I would not make a good judgment.

Lately, I have been discussing with her about the length of time our 16 year-old daughter should be on the computer. She draws very nicely and does pictures for others. She says it is way too long. I suggest a shorter time for I too think it is too long. But then she is still quite adamant about it being too long. We have yet fully resolved this as I write. But it is okay. I have learned a lot. Here are a few things from our elongated discussion.

My wife has a fear that the radiation of the monitor might affect our daughter. I asked whether there were reports out there to suggest this potential danger. I am still waiting for them. I have not heard of any. This is a fear that must be substantiated. When I made my decision, I didn't even think about this. But I asked her, "If radiation is not a problem, do you still have problems with looking at the computer so long?"

I did this several times and went down and down, discovering different concerns. In the end, it seems like my wife's chief concern is that our daughter is not doing other constructive things on the computer like learning to play the guitar, sew or help around the house. She gets 'caught' on the computer. This is where we agree and so we initiate a conversation with her on the importance of setting up a constructive summer schedule within a certain framework that we suggest. Again, this is now being done. But we do this same process over and over on all different aspects of life.

- Should we pay for something from personal and not business account? Why?
- Why is she not feeling physically well?
- What about a certain child's inability to function at his grade level in a certain course?

At times we disagree, but because I value her and believe God has gifted her with special insight, I need to patiently talk with her and help us both see why she thinks a certain way. Usually, we find things we agree to when we go deep enough. We also discover that some though are built on worry or other unsubstantiated concerns. She sees then that she should not support them.

The more we do this, I find my own judgment becomes much better. I can see things that otherwise I would miss, or with my age forget. She feels treasured because she is. And we might disagree but we have a good conversation on why we disagree. We build up each other. Wow, what a helpmate she is. I leave such situations giving praise to God for such a wife. Hopefully she goes away praising the Lord for such an understanding husband! I can't remember the last time we had a serious argument. We discuss things before the Lord in prayer and discussion as I mentioned above.

➔ Workshop

List the last three things you and your spouse had a heated argument over. How did you resolve it? Did you as a husband understand her point of view? What was it? Even more important, why did she say that?

At this point, as I promised, I want to show you how this affects your life and ministry. If you are able to love your wife as mentioned, then you will both grow in your spiritual life as well as in your ability to minister to others.

## D) A Secret to a Powerful Ministry

Let us start by focusing on some issues we face in ministry.

➔ I end up doing everything by myself.

Not enough growth in the lives of the people of God reveal that we are not committed to their edification. Jesus did everything to grow us. We need to join Him in this task. Lack of commitment, character or vision to care for others implies there is a dictator-like leader which is afraid of sharing his authority. Christ is quite different. He trained His people and entrusted the mission into their hands!

➔ I can't trust people. They might take authority and start their own church.

There are no doubt situations in which this happens but is it not because of some certain factors taking place. I believe it is because our notions of training are too superficial. Think of the task of evangelism or teaching a Sunday school class. We can take someone with us once or twice and then tell them to do the same thing. We think there is allegiance merely because they have grown up under our authority. Perhaps they even came to know the Lord through us.

We must not stop there, however. I have found some churches do well on training skills to others, while others neglect this and focus on doctrine. Their skill is arguing doctrines. We must work on skills, teaching and character. Or better put, we begin to look at any skill with the need for character traits. If one is going to be an evangelist, then he must learn to work hard. Respecting authorities about him is important.

....

➡ The people do not respond to my ministry.

Ask yourself how you care for your wife. The shepherd should love his sheep. But marriage is the training ground that affects less people than in public. Sometimes God holds people back from quickly entering ministry just so they can first work on learning to love.

I know we say that we love our sheep. We work hard for them. We walk so far to visit them. We evangelize and suffer other hardships. We get little pay. These are very touching. But it is our attitudes that sometimes keep us from bringing a tender love to the sheep. We will speak more of this in another topic but at this point we can continue with what we have discussed.

Is it possible your concepts of authority are not rightly understood. Is it possible that you really do not value the sheep. You are the gifted and responsible one. Indeed you are as a pastor or church planter. But do you value how God is working through other people in your congregation? Do you fear their gifts? Do you train them? Or do you just train them in some areas but not others?

Are you willing to listen to the wisdom and insight that the Lord would give you through the members? Or do you just make a decision and in pride not listen to warnings, cautions or improvements? Yes, people might put up with it, but your ministry can not grow very deep or big, at least not the way the Lord wants it. Just like in marriage, you need to value those the Lord works through. Genuine concern for each individual enables God to speak to them.

We need to learn how to nurture and edify God's people. It happens in the same what that He does it to us or that we as husbands love our wives.

### ❖ God's work in our lives

God has shown us how He wants to meet with us and build us up each day. Many of us are so busy in our ministries that we never meet God. If things are going good, then we don't think we have anything to learn. We are too focused on our success to think we can grow more. Others are focused on their defeat. Things are not going the way they want. They do not believe God has anything to say that can help.

The real solution comes back to a strong belief in the way God wants to relate to us. He wants to have a private time each day with us. He is not too busy to do it. Neither should we. We are totally dependent on those special things that He would say to us but also need to be shaped with the way He shows that love to us. If our fathers don't show concern for our lives, then we will not think that God will or wants to talk with us on this personal level. We will treat God as One who works with everyone rather than One who also works with each individual.

This kind of nurture is so important. I have learned so much through this. Each day the Lord helps me know what I should do, what I should write or even say in some situations. I simply meditate in His Word and think through what I will be doing that day. I see how that passage is to apply to my life. As I wait on Him, He speaks to me. God shows me all sorts of things, not like a prophet. That is not my gift.

I have never learned how to love my wife from my father or family. But in these quiet times over the many years, God has showed me how to be gentle, how to rebuke, how to tenderly care, etc. I then have learned how to apply this lesson to my wife. When I see her growing, I see some of those wrinkles and spots gone. I am so happy for her (and for me!). Our lives grow more and God works through us more.

In the same way, God helps me love His people. If you are in Christian leadership, you know how you need to be patient, kind and wise on how you instruct others. Of course, you can just tell people what to do. But then we will raise up people around us that just tell others what to do. We want someone like Jesus who was patient and wise. He talked with people and not just at them.

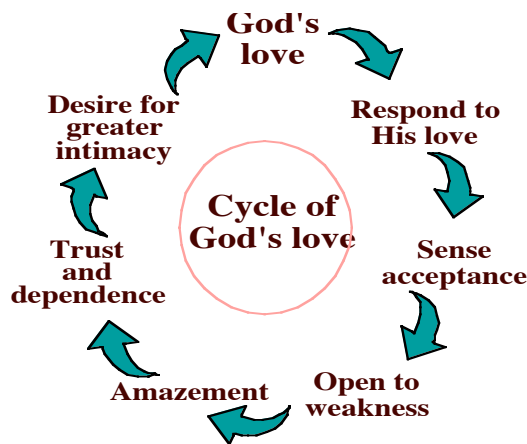
❖ **The power of God’s love through our lives**

When God has empowered us to love our wives, then loving others becomes much easier. This should be obvious. The greatest obstacle in loving our lives is loving ourselves. We are selfish. If we can overcome this in relation to our wives, then it means a lot in the way we treat and care for others in the church.

❖ **The secret of knowing God’s love**

The power of this truth is that we husbands become determined to become God’s vehicle through which God loves their wives. If we understand this, it becomes the key to a successful ministry and life for all of a sudden we get a broad picture of how God now brings His love into the world, first to our wives, to the body of Christ and to others. We are the vehicle allowing the full power of God flow through us and distributed throughout the world.

Our commitment and care for our wives is a sign that we are willing to turn to the concerns of those whom the Lord is concerned for. We need to be committed to the process of holy growth. A whole change takes place in our lives. Let me go over a chart here.



The love of God gives us a special desire to please God. This motivates us to take steps of obedience although they go contrary to what we might feel. This submissiveness, then, actually is a step of faith. Wives don’t know specifically how things will work out. They only know God is faithful who made the promises to be with His obedient children.

The agape love of her husband will also move the wife to a more complete obedience. She wants to please him. She finds she doesn’t need to contest him anymore because she can trust him to make the best judgment. Love melts fears and doubts away. Even if she doesn’t find the perfect love she would like from her husband, she can still find it in

God’s love for her. This faith then enables her to take the daring steps of being subject to her husband in love. One can see that if there is any hope for a good relationship, it will need to be restored through steps of trust and love. The wife’s submission is a critical aspect of this growing relationship.

**Our ability to love comes from being loved and accepted.** There is a great deep security that is brought about when we are perpetually and unconditionally loved. This unconditional acceptance leads to openness and humility in our lives. Fears and doubts can be put aside. As we do this, we are further amazed at His great love for us. We do not need to impress God to gain His favor. Trust is built up. We want to experientially know God more. This seeking of God then brings us to know God and His love more.

**Summary**

The power of love starts anytime you want. It is a choice. By God’s grace He has enabled you to be patient and kind, tender and understanding, rather than bossy, mean, prideful and impatient. We all need more the Spirit of Christ in us. As we do, we will see how our marriages will be transformed before our eyes. We will see the same transformation in our congregations. As God nurtures us, we learn to nurture others.

## SECRETS TO A GODLY FAMILY & POWERFUL MINISTRY

I asked a brother, do you love your wife? He said, "Yes!" I then asked if he had asked how she was doing? He admitted that he had not asked how she is doing. How can he say he loves his wife when he has not even tried to find out how she is doing?

