

# THE CHRISTIAN HOME

by

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE CHRISTIAN HUSBAND

Ephesians 5:25-33

THE WIFE is subject to the husband, and he is subject to her in love; she to his government and he to her heart; she to his rule and he to her need. In the seventeenth century, Pastor Byfield said of wives, "Nature makes her a woman; election, a wife; but only grace can make her subject." We could say of husbands, "Nature makes him a man; election, a husband; but only grace can fill his heart with the love of Christ."

### THE PATTERN

The love of Christ for the Church is to be the pattern of man's love to his wife. No man could ever love his wife to the extent that Christ loves His Church; but all saved husbands can love their wives according to the same pattern. Meyer beautifully says this command "is the sacred refrain of the whole Christian ethics of marriage." Pulsford, that great evangelical scholar of over a half century ago says, "If the love of Christ to the church is the pattern of a husband's love to his wife, his love must rather spring from what he can do for her, rather than from what she is to him." Olshausen in his commentary on Ephesians 5, says,

"Christ's love was a self-devoting, self-sacrificing love which had for its object the sanctification of the church. This self-sacrificing, sanctifying love Paul requires of husbands in marriage. True, the wife ought to practice this kind of love to her husband, but the positive influence must always proceed from the man—therefore the commandment."

To possess, manifest, and impart this love is man's special privilege and responsibility in marriage. It is his chief function.

Hodges brings out four distinguishing characteristics of Christ's love to His Church. It is:

1. *Peculiar*, Christ has a special, peculiar love for His Bride.
2. *Exclusive*, Christ has an exclusive possession of His Bride.
3. *Intimate*, His union with His Bride is more intimate than His relationship with any other portion or part of His creation. We are His Body.
4. *Delightful*, The Church is the special object of delight to Christ.

These four characteristics should mark and be fully exemplified in the husband's love for his wife.

There are two great Christian streams of thought on the meaning of love. They are not contradictory but supplementary, and both are true to the Word of God. They approach the meaning of Christ—like love from different directions—and they stress different elements in its nature.

Thomas Aquinas emphasizes the element of giving. For him, to love is to give, to will, and to desire the good of the beloved. A lover's happiness is not found alone in his own satisfaction, but most of all in the happiness of the one he loves. His love takes him out of himself and into the needs, desires, and personality of his beloved. It is a generous and unselfish love. The husband possessing the love of Christ seeks not to take for himself but to give of himself.

We can see in the Word of God how the love of Christ meant giving, all that He became and all that He did and all that He does are for us. He was willing to go all the way to the cross and there to suffer our death that we might live. Such, in pattern, is the giving, self-sacrificing love which the Christian husband bears in his heart toward his beloved.

Augustine emphasizes mainly the desire of the lover to be one with his beloved. Love creates a void in the heart that can be filled only by the beloved. Thus the lover is ever seeking a closer union of heart and life with his beloved. The lover no longer sees his happiness in terms of himself but now only in terms of union with his beloved and both in Christ. There, in that union of the two in the Third (Christ), is the meaning and fulfillment of life realized. Thus, all the Christian husband does is a seeking for deeper unity with his beloved in thought, word, and deed; and with the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the union is made, established, and sustained.

Certainly the love of Christ was a love that longed for union. He died for us not only that we might be pardoned of our sins, but that we might be united with Him forever.

In John 17 our Lord prayed for the unity of believers with each other and with God (John 17:11, 20, 21). And when our Lord ascended into heaven, He loved us so much that He gave us the Holy Spirit that we might yet be united with Him!

One has said, "A generous love, a love of giving, that gave to the last drop of the God-Man's blood; a love of unity finding realization in the oneness even of members in a spiritual Body of which He is the Head, His Church! This is what is meant by the love of Christ for His Church." And indeed, this is the love Paul did not hesitate to call the model of the love of husband and wife.

In a study of this kind, it is important to notice the word used to denote the love which should exist between husband and wife.

The Greek language has in use three words to denote what we call love.

*Storgē* is one of these words, and it represents parental and filial affection or what one has called “*tender emotion*.” This word is not used in the New Testament except in derivative forms.

*Philia* is the second word, and it denotes the love of friends, or friendship; this word is occasionally found in the New Testament in its compounds such as Philadelphia (*brotherly love*) and *philanthropia* (*kindness or love toward man in general*); in Titus 2:4, it is used (in compound forms) of love of children and of husband.

In Romans 12:10 the word *philostorgoi* (combining *philas* and *storgē*) refers to the warmth of family affection within the Christian brotherhood.

Third, there is *eros*. This word refers to love in a physical sense. The word is not found in the New Testament.

Those who translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, about two centuries before Christ, made occasional use of the *agape* to denote love in a religious (spiritual) sense—the love of God for man, or of man for God, or of man for man under inspiration of God.

Outside the Word of God this word is very rare, but is found often in classical Greek in the form of the verb *agapao*, implying deep, spiritual affection rather than passion, a love which is manifested in practical acts of kindness. The early Church, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, fastened upon the word *agapē*.

In the New Testament it is used primarily of God’s love for man, as shown, taught, and revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ; but it is used likewise of man’s love for God and also of his love for his fellowmen in and through Christ. For Christians it is the ultimate description of the nature of God. Thus it signified a far deeper and more spiritual love than *Storgē*, or tender emotion; than *philia*, human friendship; or *eros*, physical passion.

It is always filled with a content and meaning drawn directly from the idea of the love of God which our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed in His life and death.

It is significant that it is this word which Paul uses when he, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, commands husbands to love their wives. It means nothing less than that quality of the divine love with which Christ loves the Church. It is upon the enduring and indestructible nature of such love that the husband builds his spiritual ministry to his wife. For her obedience to his rule, she is to receive *agape* love in all the possible ways the Holy Spirit will reveal to the earnest husband.

*Agape* love is not an affair of the emotions only, but is an activity of the whole personality, including the will.

The world is seeking to build marriage on *eros* love. This is an unstable foundation, as unstable as the passions and attractions upon which it is founded, as is revealed by the present divorce rate.

## THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE HUSBAND'S LOVE

This love of the husband, that which is ever seeking to give itself for the beloved and ever seeking to be identified with the beloved, is to the end of definite spiritual aims and objectives. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it that He might:

- (1) **“Sanctify and cleanse it;”**
- (2) **“Present it to Himself a glorious Church—not having spot or wrinkle;”**
- (3) **“That it should be holy and without blemish.”**

The work of Christ is to the end that the Church may be set apart for Him, cleansed, glorified, and made holy.

William Kelly, in his work on Ephesians, says that these blessings are positionally secured to us when we trust Christ as our Saviour, and they are constantly being experimentally appropriated to us by the High Priestly intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the right hand of the Father's throne. The husband is vitally, responsibly, and especially related to this High Priestly work of Christ to his wife. The husband's love then becomes a channel of graces and helps to the wife which minister to her growth in grace (sanctification) and anticipates her glorification when she will have consummated her day-by-day growth by the vision of Christ. He is to be a fountain of graces and encouragements to his wife. He is to be a vital channel in Christ's High Priestly work to his wife. The husband's joy is to cherish and bless his wife.

The husband is the head of the family. The Church tells him this on the day of his wedding, and, if he will only listen, she tells him this all the rest of his life. She tells him with a confidence that stems directly from Christ and from his great apostle Paul. As head of the family, dignity and authority are his. Much more important, though, is his responsibility to bring the whole family, wife and children, to the feet of Christ.

If a man does this with a full acknowledgment of his own frailty and a childlike reliance on Christ, he will accomplish the two great goals of his life: he will become pleasing to Christ and pleasing to his wife.

This spiritual ministry of the husband includes the whole of his life. All he does is to be a means of spiritual blessing and growth to his wife. He will not only expound the Word of God to his wife and pray with her, but he will strive to labor diligently in his business that his family may be as free as possible from financial worries.

The husband's spiritual ministry will include time each day for companionship with his wife. She desires some diversion from the domestic labors of the day and naturally she looks to her husband for this diversion. If she thinks of things for them to do together, he should agree enthusiastically and take part with her. But the husband will be at his best if he thinks of things to do together and then carries them through with real interest and relish. Frequently they should get away alone, a little trip or just a quiet walk in the park. All will be such a blessing to her as to minister to her happiness and her growth in grace.

## THE INSTRUMENT OF THE HUSBAND'S MINISTRY

The instrument through which the husband is to accomplish his ministry of love is the Word, lived and taught. It is by the “**washing of water by the word**” (Ephesians 5:26). The written Word is the instrument the living Word (Christ) uses to perfect His Bride: and the husband as a co-worker with the Living Word has no other resource. It hardly needs to be said that every husband should “**study to show himself approved, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.**” If the husband is to fulfill his spiritual obligation to his wife, he must know the Word of God as thoroughly as he knows his trade; he must be as skillful in the handling of God's Word as he is in the handling of his business, or else he will be a failure as a husband.

The husband must “**let the Word of Christ dwell in him**” richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing his wife in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16). He must fill the life of his wife with spiritual sunshine; always have a word of encouragement for her from God's Word; a counsel for her in a time of trial in her life; a choice morsel day by day to guide her growth and increase her strength in the things of the Lord. He must do all his work with the tenderness of Christ and a sweet spirit of humility.

## THE GROUND OF THE HUSBAND'S MINISTRY

Hodges says that the ground of the husband's spiritual ministry to his wife is “that unity that exists between man and wife.” This unity is a unity of life made so by God. How husband and wife are united so as to form one life we do not fully understand, yet by revelation and experience we know husband and wife are “**one flesh**” (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6).

The truth of this statement can be seen again and again by anyone privileged to counsel with those in marital difficulties. How many times have we seen people who were divorced by the laws of man find that they were still attached to their mates in some inexplicable way! They couldn't break God's work of “**one flesh**” by a man-made rule. Only adultery severs that unity! Outside of adultery there is no power that can sever that unity. Many have utterly ruined their lives because they did not know or would not recognize this truth!

This intangible, indivisible unity of husband and wife is the ground of the husband's ministry. The wife, being united to him as intimately and really as his own body, may be loved as himself (Ephesians 5:28, 29, 31). If the husband really understood the truth of one flesh, it would be as easy for him to love his wife as his own body, and as difficult for him to hate her as to hate his own body. He cannot harm her without harming himself. He cannot starve her spiritual life without starving himself. What he fails to do for her he fails to do for himself.

On Ephesians 5:29, Hodges observes,

Conjugal love therefore, is as much a dictate of nature as self-love; and it is just as unnatural for a man to hate his wife as it would be for him to hate himself or his own body. A man may have a body which does not altogether suit him. He may wish it were handsomer, healthier, stronger, or more active. Still it is his body, it is himself; and he nourishes it and cherishes it tenderly as though it were the best and loveliest body man ever had.

So a man may have a wife whom he could wish to be better, or more beautiful, or more agreeable; still she is his wife, and by the constitution of nature and ordinance of God—a part of himself. In neglecting her or ill using her he violates the laws of nature and the laws of God. It is thus Paul presents the matter. If the husband and wife are one flesh, the husband must love his wife, “**for no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.**”

The Greek for nourish means properly *to nourish up, to train up by nurture, as a parent a child*; the Greek for cherish means *to warm, to cherish as a mother does an infant in her bosom*. Both terms express tenderness and solicitude, and therefore both are suited to express the care with which every man provides for the wants and comforts of his own body. “Both terms express the heart and spirit of the husband’s attitude, responsibility and ministry to his wife!”

The unity of husband and wife was made by God so that the husband would find it easier to carry out his obligation to his wife and more difficult to fail in it.

### **THE RETURN OF THE HUSBAND’S MINISTRY**

Because husband and wife are one flesh, all he does for his wife shall return in blessing upon himself; “**He that loveth his wife loveth himself**” (Ephesians 5:28). The love poured into the life of the wife comes back again to him through her. If any husband complains that he receives little of spiritual blessing from his wife, he might seriously study to see if it is not also true that he gives very little to her.

Husband means “house-band” (Old Norse); thus husband is the one who binds the home together. One writer says: “Did you ever hear the word husband explained? It means literally the band of the house; the support of it, the person who keeps it together, as a band keeps together a sheaf of corn. There are many married men who are not husbands because they are not the band of the house.” The husband is to band the marriage together by his ministry to the physical and spiritual needs of his wife.

If the husband does not operate effectively on both these levels, the band of that marriage is broken. When the band breaks, the spokes of the wheel fall apart; the bouquet of flowers fall scattered to the earth; the marriage may fall apart, and the lives of husband and wife be separated.

God gave Adam a wife that she might be a help to him. The root meaning of the word help comes from a word meaning “*a surrounder.*” Thus the wife is one who surrounds her husband with love, sympathy and tenderness. When the band of the husband is strong, then the two are bound together in a blessed unity of fellowship, and the wife is enabled to surround the husband with the return of all his blessings to her—pressed down and running over. Her full effectiveness as a surrounder depends on his effectiveness as a binder.

One suggested derivation of the word wife means “weaver” (Gothic). The husband, in his spiritual ministry, provides the wife with rich graces and blessings which she in turn weaves into the fabric of the marriage life to the joy and blessing of the whole family.

What the husband gives is not only given back to him, but pressed down and running over. Each seed of spiritual blessing he gives to his wife is multiplied and given back to him. When God took Eve from a part of Adam's body, Adam received that part in the multiplied form of hands that helped him; eyes that looked upon him with interest; feet that went with him; a mind that thought with him; ears that heard him speak; a living body and soul that loved him. And God is still multiplying!

### FOR HER HUSBAND

Eternal Guardian of the good and true,  
Before whose altar my first bridal vows  
Were pledged, whose blessing sanctified the bonds  
That joined our beating hearts; oh! God! I thank Thee  
That he, the dear one that Thou gavest me then,  
My life companion, at my side still walks;  
Keep him, I pray, a thousand times I pray Thee,  
Keep him in body and in soul, increase his faith and  
Guide his footsteps in Thy way, whate'er his earthly lot,  
or good, or evil;  
Give him a gentle and contented heart  
And teach him still to prize my best endeavors  
To sweeten life for him and guard his love;  
And still as time rolls onward, and life loses  
The bloom and fragrance of its earlier days,  
O'er the brown autumn and the hoary winter  
Of our declining age, pour the bright sunshine  
Of hope and peace ineffable. Thus lead us  
On to one quiet grave; then, in Thy mercy  
Take our world-wearied souls to dwell with Thee,  
Where doubt and sorrow never more can come;  
And He, who for my sins from heaven came down  
To wear the robe of scorn and thorny crown,  
To bear His heavy cross, then hang and bleed  
And die for me, 'tis in His name I plead.

W. Calvert  
Wife's Manual

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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