**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Spirit Filled Living: A Husband’ s Love**

**Ephesians 5:25-27**

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 We are continuing our series in Ephesians, Brought to Life; Brought Together. We are in chapter five, where Paul discusses marriage. So far, we have looked at God’s vision for marriage to display Christ’s relationship with his church (5:31-32). Then we saw that God calls wives to respect and follow their husband’s leadership (5:22-24). Today we see that God calls husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (5:25-27). My big idea is pretty simple, Christ’s love for his church is the pattern for a husband’s love for his wife.

 Let me outline the passage before we read it. First, Paul gives the *instruction*, husbands are to love their wives. Then Paul gives an *illustration* or an analogy, a husband’s love for his wife is to be like Christ’s love for his church. Then Paul gives an *explanation,* describing Christ’s love, he gave himself for the church to sanctify her and ultimately to present her to himself in splendor. Finally, there is an *application*, which we will look at next week. Husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies in the same way that Christ loves the church because it is his body (28-30).

**The Instruction: Husbands Lead by Loving their Wives (25)**

 I find it interesting that after instructing wives to respect and follow their husband’s leadership, he does not tell husbands to lead but to love. This is because love is the way husbands exercise leadership. Husbands, and those who want to be husbands, listen well. What Paul says about how a husband is to love his wife is humanly impossible and should make you desperate for God’s grace and the Spirit’s fullness in your life. You do not have the resources within you to love your wife as Christ loves his church.

**The Illustration: Christ is the Pattern for Husband’s Love (25-26)**

 Husbands are called by God to love their wives as Christ loved the church. So, Christ is our model, giving us a pattern to follow for how husbands are to love their wives. Then he describes the nature of Christ’s love three ways. First, Christ like love is sacrificial. We see this in the phrase, he gave himself up for her (25), referring to God’s covenantal love for his church by saving her. God loves the world in a general sense but God loves his church with a covenantal love that it is distinct and particular for the church. So too husbands are to love their wives by dying daily to ourselves – our desires, our wants, and yes, our own needs (Mat 16:24) for the good of our wives. Let me give you a couple of implications here. First, you may not of had a good example growing up of a dad who was a loving husband but you have the best example to follow in Christ. Secondly, husbands or would be husbands, you will not fully grasp what it means to love your wives as Christ loved the church unless you come to love the church like Christ does.

 Secondly, Christ like love serves. We see this in the first purpose of Christ’s love, he gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word (26). His death not only secured her salvation, it secured her sanctification. He died to sanctify the church, make us conformed to his image (Rom 8:28). So too husbands love their wives by leading them toward spiritual growth, becoming like Christ. What does that look like? At the least, it means cleansing your wife with the word - reading the word to her and with her, praying the word over her, and any other way you can encourage her spiritually. Husbands, are you loving your wife by leading her spiritually?

 Third, Christ like love has an eternal perspective. We see this in the ultimate purpose of Christ giving himself up for the church, to present her to himself in splendor or glory (27). He gave himself up for the church to secure her salvation, her sanctification, and her glorification. His death secured them all. If you have genuinely experienced salvation, you will be sanctified and glorified! Here is tremendous hope for us all, he who began a good work in you will complete it at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6)! Promises like these are meant to motivate us to fight against sin and fight for holiness.

 Our glorified state is described as without spot or wrinkle or any such thing so that we are completely holy, without any moral imperfection. That day, the church will be presented to Christ with our resurrected bodies, without sin or sickness. I performed a wedding yesterday. The wedding party were all dressed up, it was a joyous and celebrative occasion, and the bride was absolutely stunning and dressed in white. They had been preparing for this moment for years and it was finally here. Everyone who was present was not just excited for the wedding but for all that it represents, a bright and happy together, two lives becoming one. Photos were taken and they will have them all their lives. Those photos will bring back memories as they look at them. That day and those photos in particular will be like an old faded black and white photo. When you look at it, you can barely make out the images in the photo compared to the day when we are presented to Christ, body and soul glorified, and meet him face to face. Imagine for a moment, what experiencing our union with Christ perfected and you taste endless and infinite happiness that will only be ever increasing. The fulness of God’s love and eternal life and the experiences of eternity will push your glorified senses to their limits. This is why marriage is much bigger than you but about Christ and what he accomplished on the cross that secures everything I have been describing and more, for you.

 So, husbands, love your wives like Christ loves the church. Wives, respect and follow your husband’s leadership like the church respects and follows Christ’s leadership. This way your marriage will be an incubator for harmony, happiness, and above all, holiness. And above all, your marriage will be a stage, a platform displaying Christ’s relationship with his church.

Response:

* Husbands, is your love sacrificial, serving, and with an eternal perspective?
* Wives, are you respecting and following your husband’s leadership?
* How is God speaking to you?

**Life Group Questions:**

1. What are three characteristics of Christ like love for husbands?
2. Why do you think Paul tells husbands to love their wives four times?
3. Husbands, what are some ways you can be more loving in your marriage?
4. Wives, how can you positively encourage your husband’s love?
5. How is God speaking to you in this message?
6. How does this passage relate to you own discipleship?
7. How does this message help you in making disciples?