

Marriage: Agape Love Colossians 3:19 and Ephesians 5:21-33 August 17, 2008 - Skip MacMillan

What does God's Church look like at home?

Virtues: Colossians 3:12-17.

Wives submitting to their husbands.

Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

God's design for home life

Some of us struggle with His design.

But where is the call to break her will, to suppress her, to crush her spirit, or to control her?

What is it that that is so offensive? Submit, love, deny yourself and give to her?

Husbands who are believers in Jesus Christ do not rule their homes with an iron fist but with the love of Christ.

"If the home is to be a means of grace it must be a place of rules . . . the alternative to rule is not freedom but the unconstitutional (and often unconscious) tyranny of the most selfish member" -CS Lewis.

Biblical Balance: not anarchy, not domination by any one person, but mutual: denial of self, giving, mutual sacrifice, and over all these things love.

Husbands "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them."

Why do we have to be told by God to love our wives?

The one you picked, the one you asked to marry you, the one you committed your life to. How did we get to the point where now God has to tell us to love her?

Need love

"Your love is like a morning mist, like the early dew that disappears" (Hosea 6:4).

We sought her because we had a need, she met that need, now we no longer need her. This need may have lasted a night, a month or even several years. Which ever it was, it was temporary and after our need is met, we are satisfied, our need diminishes and all but disappears; there is no more need, so there is no more "Need-love."

Merit Love

We love her like we love a new car. As long as the car smells new, remains unscratched, runs great, giving us no problems, we "love her." But as soon as the car begins to fade, need a tune up, new tires, gets a scratch or two, and the paint isn't quite as shiny, then our "love" wanes.

Merit based love: he is not in love with the person but the exterior, the object.

Agape love loves the person; the exterior is not relevant. I love her, for she is mine and I am hers.

Resentment

We have become disappointed with her, what we thought we were getting is not what we got. But what did we think?

"He must scrupulously avoid the temptation to resent her being the person she is, to become bitter or angry when she turns out to be, like him, a real human being, and not merely the projection of his own hopes or fantasies" -NT Wright.

Children, we can love our children in place of loving her.

The Scripture lays out a sequence, God and you; God, you and your spouse; God, you, your spouse and then your children. Live it.

Providing or Hiding?

You must provide for your family, without question, 1 Timothy 5:8.

The temptation is to allow our provision to be the sole voice of our love for her.

Equation: "I provide therefore I love and she should be thankful."

How many of us are spending so much time "providing" because we are hiding from her?

Either we don't know how to love her or have grown tired or we simply have given up loving her.

The government can provide for her and they don't even love her.

Why?

1. You don't feel capable or good enough, fear she may be disappointed if she knew the real you, or maybe you are unwilling and stubborn so you use providing as the sole demonstration of your love.
2. Safe and egocentric: providing enables us to keep our physical distance, meet the needs of our ego because we can achieve at work and oh, by the way provide for our wives. So we work late, excessively, and compulsively.
3. What if one day you are not able to provide, then what? She doesn't want the stuff; she wants you.
4. If she wants more stuff, then sit down and talk through how stuff is not the answer, the answer is found in Jesus Christ.

But before you get all worked up, be honest, check your own heart for ego and pride.

Have you been feeding this materialism?

Do this with the virtues of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

God has to tell us to love our wives because we need Him to remind us.

Because we do fall into resentment, need-love, merit love, children and providing, these are easier.

They are replacements from doing the hard work of loving her.

What does Agape mean? (*Love* by EV McKnight, and recommended, C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves*)

Agape is not an emotion, affection or even romantic attachment.

Agape love is certainly not a breaking of her will but instead a building of her person (Stott).

"**Caring** love, a deliberate attitude of mind that concerns itself with the well-being of the one loved" -Vaughan.

Giving, giving up self and giving to her.

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 John 3:17).

BB Warfield bio.

Self-sacrificing

Jesus is our Example, **Ephesians 5:22-33**.

God saw His covenant with His people as a marriage covenant: Isaiah 54:5-8, Ezekiel 23, Hosea 1-3.

Jesus says in Ephesians 5, I am the groom, husband, the God of the Old Testament.

As the groom, He laid down his life for His bride.

"Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her".

He loved when she did not love him, Romans 5.

His love compels her, frees her, 2 Corinthians 5:14.

Unconditional love to compelling love to self sacrificing, self denial.

This is the Gospel.

Steadfast and Unconditional love – not merit or need-love, **Hosea** and **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**.

Personal: To lift her spirit, speak words into her that build her up according to her needs, to listen, to remind her who she is in Jesus Christ, to be proud of her, to trust her, to pray for her and with her, to thank her, to serve her as Christ does the Church.

“Do not be harsh with them”, “do not be embittered against them”.

Again, how strange that God should have to command us to “not be harsh” with our wives.

This is the very thing some people think of when they hear of Christian marriage.

Yet this is in direct conflict with the teaching of Scripture.

It forbidden for “a Christian man to be harsh in his treatment of anyone, especially of his own wife” -FF Bruce.

Anger is a big issue among men: Colossians 3: 15 - “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”.

You need to get help; you can love her by getting help and being committed to getting help.

Repent when you are angry; look her in the eyes and ask for forgiveness.

Points:

Love is a verb.

“Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” -1 John 3:17.

“It is an active and unceasing care for her well-being” -FF Bruce.

Studying love is not living love.

We can get caught up, intentionally or not, in the study of loving our wives and miss it all together.

We can know all the Greek words, read the books, but until you are living it, day in and day out, waiting, forgiving, risking, giving, remaining committed, you know nothing of love. Until you have felt the sting of disappointment with her, been completely transparent, given of yourself, stayed when you felt like doing otherwise, you do not know love.

Your love of God is directly tied to your love for your wife.

John 21:15-17 - “Simon son of John, do you truly love Me . . . feed/take care of My sheep”.

Also, John 13:34-35.

I knew a man . . .

What if she is not lovable? What if she has become your enemy?

God is our example, Romans 5:5-8

Matthew 6:43-48 - “. . . love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”

Unconditional, not based on any reciprocating love, character, beauty, behavior, words or feeling.

Late Bloomers

Husband, you came into the picture about the second quarter or after half time.

How do you enter into the picture after she has already been there several years, being patient, praying, leading in your stead, feeling uncomfortable but pressing on.

How do you enter the picture? As the long lost hero who has finally arrived, riding in to save the day?

Talk with your wife, apologizing for your late arrival, for missing the train. Then discuss how you can begin in a progression to support her and begin fulfilling your role as spiritual head of your family.

Wives, make room for him. Luke 15, The Prodigal son and his brother: celebrate, thank God, incorporate

Effects of you loving your wife

1. Affects your wife

Jesus' love (words, actions and tone) has an effect on her.

Jesus' love for the church sanctified her.

Husbands' love for their wives sanctifies her, that is, she becomes the woman God designed.

"The bride does not make herself presentable; it is the bridegroom who labors to beautify her in order to present her to himself" -Stott.

Jesus' love does not act to "impose an alien identity upon the church, but to free her (the church) from the spots and wrinkles which mar her beauty and to display her in her true glory. The Christian husband is to have a similar concern. His headship will never be used to suppress his wife. He longs to see her liberated from everything which spoils her true feminine identity and growing towards that 'glory,' that perfection of fulfilled personhood which will be the final destiny of all those whom Christ redeems" -Stott.

Wives, respond to this love with submission and respect, in-turn building confidence and trust.

Free: "When a person is voluntarily amenable to another, gives way to him, and places himself at the service, he shows greater dignity and freedom than an individual who cannot bear to be a helper and partner to anyone but himself" -Stott.

2. Affects your children

Your children need you to love your wife, they need to see a great marriage.

3. Affects others as a testimony to God

"A Christian husband who even partially fulfills this ideal (to love his wife as Christ loves the church) preaches the gospel without ever opening his lips, for people can see in him that quality of love which took Jesus Christ to his cross" -Stott.

Wives, make it easy for your husband to love you.

Husbands, your homework is to figure out various ways to love your wife.

No list, you figure her out!

Ephesians 5:33

"However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Within the act of submission is love and within agape love is submission.