

We said last week that Marriage and Family life..... is the Divine **Theatre**.... through which God keeps on testifying to Who He is and what He is up to in the world.

We saw that the marriage relationship (in particular) is the **spotlight** under which family's can demonstrate what it looks like for someone to be FILLED with the Spirit of God...

Specifically, (last week) we said that marriage is **the stage** on which WIVES can demonstrate that **they believe** their husband is the HEAD of their home..... (whether he acts like it or not....)

That is an ACT of faith.... to the degree than any of you wives are doing so.... make sure you realize that it is evidence of a Holy Spirit empowered **TRUST** in the Word of God.....

Instead of trusting in your emotions.... or Oprah..... or Dr. Phil..... or in what you have read in a romance novel....

Wives who submit to their husbands believe.... GOD is out to display the mystery and magnificence of His work in the church..... **through each individual marriage**.

As she finds grace to willingly submit to her husband..... she does her part in making her HOME into a theatre for the glory of God....

- But what is **man's** role in this drama?

While your flesh might **wish**....(with this key ingredient of your wife's submitting to your leadership in place)..... that you get a **free pass** to fully enjoy the benefits of your NFL channel subscription....

Or to be **completely engrossed** in accomplishing all of your career goals...

Or to be able to **dictate** how often you get to play golf....

God has BETTER and more profitable direction in mind for you.....

He calls you to show forth God's glory ...by **LOVING** your wife....

in a way that mirrors Christ's love for His Bride.....the church.

**Ephesians 5:25-27**

"Husbands, **love** your wives,

**as** Christ loved the church  
and **gave himself up** for her,

that he might sanctify her,  
having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

**so that** he might **present** the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."

This is no small task..... in fact.... it can be **daunting**.....

I come to you this morning as a husband who is trying to **GROW** in doing this..... NOT as one who has arrived.

The question is not whether we should love our wives.... (this is an **imperative** command).. so we are sinning every time we fall short of this assignment...

- The question is HOW do we do it?

I hope God will shed light on that through our study this morning....

### **How to Love Your Wife**

#### 1. Love Her with Christ's **Own** Love

Remember that Christ has loved your wife before loved her before either of you were ever born.... and He has chosen you as a **primary instrument** through which to love her...

Yet When God says Husbands love your wives...here... He is not saying **romance** her.... (although he does in other places). He is not saying **reward** her ...**if** she makes you happy....

He is commanding us (husbands) to love with a HIGHER FORM of love....

Word is .... (**agape** love).... **unconditional**

Vaughan defines it as **a deliberate attitude of mind that concerns itself with the well-being of the one loved**. Self – devotion, not self satisfaction is the dominant trait."

Be **honest** – in your flesh.... that is the opposite of why men love.....

(Apart from grace).... we love **to GET**....

We love because it makes us feel good...

We love those who love us.....or can do something we DESIRE...for us...

To love someone (esp. our wife) without condition..... or **expectation**.

Is an action we can only do with God's supernatural HELP!

If you ask... He **will** help you....

As you actively believe the **gospel**, the Holy Spirit flows the love of God into your heart.....so that you are then empowered to freely pass Christ's own love on to others....

Paul defines what this agape (unconditional) love looks like in real life....

### 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

"Love is **patient** and **kind**; love does not envy or boast; it is not **arrogant** or **rude**. It does not **insist on its own way**; it is not **irritable** or **resentful**; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but **rejoices with the truth**. Love bears all things, **believes all things**, **hopes** all things, **endures** all things."

I **fall short** of loving my wife like that everyday..... when I do....God is quick to convict me.... and by His grace forgive me.....

I go to her and ask her (AGAIN) to forgive me to..... she does (because she knows she has been forgiven by Christ).

While God commands us to love all people with agape love..... the command here (to love our wives as Christ loves the church) means we are called to love our wives with **sacrificial devotion**.....

With A LOVE that is **uniquely** and **particularly** reserved for **her**... and only her.

That is how Christ loves His Bride...

### How to Love Your Wife

## 2. Love Her with Sacrificial Devotion

God loves all people in a general way..... but the Bible is clear... that our Good Shepherd laid down His life for the church....

### John 10:14-15

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."

Jesus willingly laid down his life for **HIS** sheep... **His** one and only Bride –

His own life blood.... enacted the New Covenant..... which bound Him eternally to his blood bought people... We are HIS possession.

So the ULTIMATE **expression of LOVE**.... is the self **sacrifice** of a man for His Bride:

Here are some practical applications of what that should look like in your marriage:

Loving your wife with Sacrificial Devotion..... means...

**A).... Considering yourself as DEAD to womanizing.**

It means securing the devotion of your EYES... MIND and HEART for the wife of your youth.

Reserving your Affections and Attention for **ONE WOMAN**....

Malachi says .....She is your **sole** companion and your wife by covenant....be faithful to her alone in your love..

Consider every OTHER woman.... either as another man's wife... or another man's daughter... no matter how wayward she may be...

When Paul was telling Timothy the requirements of godly men for leadership in the church..... one of the preeminent ones... is that he be a ONE WOMAN man.

Anything less.... (in thought, or deed) .... is portraying a LIE.... about Christ....

Secondly, It means being willing to

**B) Sacrifice your own selfish pleasure for her good.**

No characteristic of our culture heralds the cry "We are Selfish People!" louder than the rampant decline in how **little** we value marriage.

Shacking up is easy..... is **CASUAL**..... convenient.....

But marriage.... is SERIOUS. It means GIVING UP things which do not benefit and help your marriage or your wife.

Any **thing**..... any **RIGHT**.....any pursuit.....any activity..... men.... that you are saying NO.. **this is MINE**... this is OFF limits??

Marriage – by design.... is a MEANS of God helping us to **CRUCIFY selfishness**.... as we willingly consider our wife's interests as **just as important as our own**..

That is no easy task.... good news... Christ is not asking you to go as far as He did in laying down His life for you.....

**Hebrews 12:4**

"In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood."

Loving your wife sacrificially means...

C) **Praying for your Wife** as Christ does His church.

Kent Hughes – "We should be praying for their spiritual life, obligations, pressures, friendships, and dreams daily and passionately, for that is how Christ intercedes for us!"

Pray for your wife.... as often as God brings her to your mind...

Keep a picture of her as the home screen on your computer... on your phone.....on your desk..... Pray for her as often as God brings her to your mind.....

Sacrifice thinking about your sports team....or your vacation plans..... in order to lovingly build her up through prayer.

Loving your wife sacrificially means

D) **CLEANSE her thinking** with the gospel.

**Ephesians 5:26**

"that he might **sanctify** her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,"

Sanctify = to make holy..... to be SET APART for a special purpose...

Washings (or **Ablutions**) were an important part of the priestly service in Israel.... When Priests were first set apart for their ministry.... they had to undergo a special CLEANSING prior to putting on the priestly garments....

JESUS **accomplished** our CLEANSING .....on the cross... washing us with His own innocent blood....so we could commune with Him as His Bride...

We are **DIFFERENT** from other people.... (through what He has done)....we are SET APART for our BRIDEGROOM!

The only way we **know** that..... the only way we can ACTUALLY be cleansed from our sin... is **by hearing** and believing the soul cleansing good news of the gospel!

**Husbands**.... you can sacrificially love and serve your wife by REGULARLY washing her mind with that good news....

Her mind.... (like yours).....gets flooded with doubts.... fears..... GUILTS...  
condemnation....

sometimes even despair.... **depression**.....

But God has given you to her (as her Spiritual HEAD).....

.... to help her think in LINE with what God says about her in His Word...

To WASH her mind and her conscience with **the TRUTH**.....

This can be done in conjunction with the whole family (if you have children).....

But you also need to CARVE out times to listen to what she is thinking.....(and feeling)...

In order to help SHAPE her reality according to what GOD says about her here.

Lovingly... sacrificially.....washing her with the GOOD NEWS of who she is.....

And what her future holds!

Re-Apply the Washing Agent of Gospel Truth

### How to Love Your Wife

#### 3. Love Her Glorious **Future!**

One of our kids favorite activities is to look back through old pictures of when April and I were preparing for marriage. In those shots....you can see the **mutual admiration** and expectation on our faces....

Even though we did not marry until we were 30.... we were still young, full of dreams and committed to growing old together.....

As real and true as our love for each other was **then**..... it is only a FRACTION of what my love for my bride is today....

In fact, it would be down right depressing to try and look **backwards** in order to generate some feelings of affection and attraction for my wife....

God calls you (Christian husband) to love your wife in the same way Christ loved the church..... by **seeing her glorious future!**

I have been invigorated by how **life giving** this truth is..... love her as Christ loved the church.....

**How** did / does Christ love His church?

Christ (2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Godhead) who foreknew each of us (that are His) before the first star was spoken into being.... Who KNOWS and FELT the pain of each transgression His people have conceived of and carried out against the holy law of God....on the cross..

Who KNOWS not only the sin that you **have** carried out...but every single, rotten and evil thought and **fantasy** that has ever crossed your mind.....

- How does Christ love a church made up of **polluted**, **stained** people like that?

Christ did **not** love the church by remembering what she looked like or how she acted....when **she was young**.....

As He looks back at **the inception** of His love for His people.... Christ did not see **anything loveable** about her.....:

#### **Ezekiel 16:3-6**

"and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. And as for your birth, on the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you, but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born. "And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' I said to you in your blood, 'Live!'"

Christ loved the church by loving what God was making her to **Be**.... not by what she once was....

When He was wedded in covenantal love to His Bride....she was an **unlovable stain** on the face of the earth.... like the rest of mankind...

So, for you Christian...(man or woman)...

If you feel **unworthy** of being loved by God..... your assessment is an accurate one.

However!, because of His **grace**..... God has **chosen** to set his PARTICULAR love on you .....

#### **Ephesians 1:3-6**

" Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ

with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, **that** we should be holy and blameless before him.

In **love** he **predestined** us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

God DECIDED to set His love on you... personally... individually....so that you could be part of His glorious, blameless BRIDE.... that praises the **goodness** of His **grace**.

He specifically chose to DEMONSTRATE that love for **you**.... by crucifying His own in Son in your place.....while you were actively and intentionally **sinning** against His Name....

### **Romans 5:8**

"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Christian husband... if you have the faith of a mustard seed.... that should be liberating for you....

You don't have to try and drum up some romantic memory of why you should love your wife..... You should not have to make her dress her in some sensuous way in order for you to be attracted to her...

you have been wed to **a daughter of God Most High**.... who promises to make her glorious on the wedding day of the Her Savior.....

She is a Princess of the King!!....

Her future is VERY bright.....

### **Ephesians 5:27**

"so that he might present the church to himself in **splendor**, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."

Nothing inherently wrong with wrinkle removing creams.... or covering up blotches on her skin.....

But God wants your bride to know..... a DAY is coming when she will be GLORIFIED in her Savior! When not only will her outward appearance be **RADIANT**....

But (more importantly) her SOUL and all the deeds of her life... will be utterly **beautiful** in God's sight.

Christ loves each member of His Bride out of **THAT** reality!.... and so can we...

Because... (husbands) it is that type of unconditional (indeed **unmerited** love) BY which Christ intends to make your Bride all the **more lovely!**

It was Spurgeon who best conveys this idea:

...The Savior loved, not because there was loveliness in his Church, but in order to make her lovely. ....He did not admire her because there was no spot in her; he did not choose her because she had no wrinkle; but fixed his affections where there were multitudinous spots and wrinkles; where everything was deformity, he still set his heart, and would not withdraw till he had **loved the spots away**, and loved every wrinkle out of her who was the object of his choice.

And now he seems to say to every Christian man, however unhappily he may have fared; "If perchance in the lot of Providence you have been yoked to one who deserves but little of your affection, yet if you cannot love because of esteem, love because of pity; if you cannot love because of present merit, then love because of **future hope**, for possibly, even there, in that bad soil, some sweet flower may grow; be not weary of holy tillage, and of heavenly plowing and sowing, because at the last there may spring up some fair harvest that shall **make glad your soul.**"

Do you recognize husbands..... how we are the agents of the Lord?....

So that as we (by faith) cooperate with His Spirit in providing the loving context out of which our wives may FLOWER in the Lord?

No Secret: It is IMPOSSIBLE for you to do that in your own power. Your flesh lives exclusively for your **self-satisfaction**....

You NEED to be filled with the Spirit of Christ Himself.... in order to love her as He does.... based on what He promises to make her...

Instead of being irritated by some habit... that grates on your nerves.....

Instead of magnifying some flaw in her outward beauty or in her character.....

Lovingly PRESENT yourself as God's agent in loving the RADIANT beauty of who God is making her to be....

In a recent entry on the DG blog... John Piper addresses this as a way to love all believers...

- How does God love you? He loves you by **crediting you** with the righteousness of His Son..... He **REGARDS you** as **GOOD**... as HOLY....

Out of you BELIEVING that truth..... He transforms you ...day by day.... into someone who is lovely...

Piper - Now the question is: Can we do something similar? Can we, by God's grace, love someone into loveability? Chesterton said, "Unlovely things must be deeply loved before they become loveable."

Husband... if you are having trouble LOVING your wife... begin by realizing how UNLOVABLE **you** must be in God's holy sight.....

As you confess your hard heartedness..... ask Him for grace to see your Bride as Christ sees His church..... through the **eyes of FAITH** in God's Word.

And that He has chosen YOU as His instrument of **believing in her future**..... so that you can love her according to what she will certainly BE....

Christ's plans for His wife are glorious..... her PRESENTATION Day is coming soon....

In the mean time.... our marriages can mirror SOME of that glory.... as we let His LOVE shape our hearts....

So that our lives can be laid down ..... to beautify our wives with His everlasting Love.