

Chapter 12

CHRISTIAN FAMILY 2 *HUSBANDS LOVE YOUR WIVES*

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church -- for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery -- but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

- I. In Paul's instructions to the Ephesian church concerning family relationships, God's first command to the husband is a command for the husband to love his wife in the same way and with the same quality of love as Christ loves the church. Incidentally, there are 58 words of instruction to wives and 155 words of instruction to husbands in this passage of scripture on marriage and family relationships. (Ephesians 5:25)
 - A. God's greatest commandments involve love. Jesus tells us in Matthew 22:36-40 that the most important commandment of all is to love God supremely and the second most important is to love others as one loves oneself. Paul says the most important commandment for husbands is to love their wives as Christ loves the church. (Matthew 22:36-40)
 - B. It is important that we note that the admonition to love one's wife is a commandment. This takes it out of the realm of emotion and places it in the realm of the will.
 - 1. The godly love that a man is to have for his wife is not merely a feeling, it is a decision. This is not only a Hollywood-style romantic love, but a love of commitment and covenant.
 - 2. The love that God commands is not an accident, like "falling in love." The whole concept of "falling in love" implies that it is an accident of fate or an unintentional emotional slip. If one can "fall in love" then one just as easily can "fall out of love." The love of a husband for his wife is not an accident.
 - 3. We must recognize that if love can be commanded then the command can be obeyed. You can do this! I do! I will!
 - 4. **It isn't love that sustains your marriage, it's marriage that sustains your love.** Romance draws a man and woman together, Commitment makes a marriage, Faithfulness keeps it going for life.

- C. God is very specific concerning the quality of husband-love. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. This speaks of the kind and quality of love a husband has for his wife. How did Christ love the church? (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19)
1. Christ loved the church with a godly, giving kind of love. Christ's love for the church seeks the good of the church as a husband's love must seek the good of his wife.
 2. There are three kinds of love referred to in the New Testament, each defined by a different word in the original language. In Modern English usage we often lose the distinction between these types or qualities of love.
 - a. **Eros love** refers to sexual passion or sexual love. This love is concerned primarily with what it gets from the other person in terms of pleasure and satisfaction. **Eros love takes.**
 - b. **Phileo love** refers to the love that one has for a dear friend or a brother or sister. This love is concerned with the mutual benefits of the relationship. **Phileo love shares.**
 - c. **Agape love** refers to the kind of love God has for us, the kind of love that Christ has for the church. This love is concerned with how it can give, serve, and bless the other person. **Agape love gives.**
- D. Christ loved the church with God's Agape kind of love. Christ gave Himself for the church. Husband, give yourself for your wife. (Ephesians 5:26-27)
1. He gave Himself to the church; He didn't merely give wealth that He accumulated, did not give the church worldly power and position, did not use His relationship with the church for his own pleasures.
 2. He used His authority and power to make the church special! By Christ's love for the church He took something of insignificance and made it eternally significant. (1 Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 5:33; 1 Peter 4:8)
 3. He made the church beautiful by His love. His words cleansed her; gave her vision and hope. What are your words doing to your wife?
 4. His self-sacrifice removed her imperfections; Christ gave Himself to make her perfect. What sacrifice do you make to make your wife happier? Do you consider her desires?
 5. Christ gave Himself eternally to the Church. Do you give your wife as much time, attention, etc. as you give yourself, your career, your leisure activities?
 6. If you want to be a King the best way to go about it is to make your wife a Queen.
- E. Married men, you are first a husband, then a father. If you don't set this value and priority, you and others will suffer for it.

1. If you are a married person there is no human relationship that takes precedence over the husband - wife relationship. Only your spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ is a higher priority over your relationship with your wife.
2. Children, church, friends, associates; all these relationships come after the relationship with your wife in terms of the priority you place on them. Paul saw this truth, and emphasized the responsibility of the man to his wife.
3. This may require some hard decisions in terms of balancing your commitments and interests but it pays life-long dividends.

II. Here are some of the things the Bible clearly teaches us concerning a husband's responsibility to his wife:

- A. **Husband, Love Your Wife** - and then act like you love her! Even if you feel it is not in your nature to freely express love and affection, you have God's new nature within you now, so love her with godly love and affection. Don't be like the man who said to his wife, "I told you I love you when we got married. If anything ever changes, I'll let you know!" Be thoughtful of your wife's interests and desires, spend time with her, honor her publicly and let others know you love her. Take special note that one of the potential dangers to the marriage relationship is found in the work place. At the office, everyone is dressed up, on their best behavior, being polite and considerate. This often causes unfavorable comparisons with the person we see mostly at home where often no effort is being made to be nice. (1 Peter 3:7)
- B. **Husband, Provide for Your Wife** - We live in a changing society in which traditional roles of the husband as the bread-winner and the wife as a stay-at-home housewife and mother are rapidly and radically being re-shaped. The mobility of families, the more frequent break-up of families, changing economic expectations and demands... all these things and more are causing us to have to take a serious look at how to meet the demands of the twenty-first century and maintain the qualities of family life. The husband is no longer in most cases the sole bread-winner for the family, but there are biblical principles that must be applied if we want family success.
1. The husband still remains responsible in God's eyes for the needs of his family. He must be a responsible man in terms of how he uses his time and energies to provide for his family.
 2. If, for economic or other reasons the wife is working outside the home, the husband must take up his fair share of other family duties such as household chores and must also be even more actively involved in caring for and raising the children.
 3. The husband must be the leader and initiator in providing for the needs of the family even though the actual earning and producing may be shared..
- C. **Husband, Protect Your Wife** - Even though the image of the husband as the hunter-warrior may no longer be appropriate in modern society, there is a very real sense in which the husband is to be the canopy of protection for his wife. Men often abdicate this role and responsibility and sort of fade into the background, expecting the wife to deal with all the "details" of bill paying, child-raising, and interacting with the community. The godly husband must fulfill his role as protector of his wife and family.

1. Husbands, be a knight in shining armor to protect your wife against angry neighbors, bill collectors, conflicts based outside the home, and problems of rebellion and disrespect from the children.
2. Support, encourage, and uplift your wife. When you see she is under pressure from outside or inside the home, offer to help, to intervene, to ease the burden. Be sure you have her best interest at heart.
3. The Bible does not in any way tell the husband to make his wife submit to him. The husband is to love his wife, show that love in practical ways, and the wife will submit to his loving authority in a partnership that produces strength and security for the home and all who are in it.

D. **Husband, Communicate with Your Wife** - The communication needs of men and women are different. Men tend to see communication as dealing with information, facts, and problem solving. Women tend to see communication as dealing with feelings, ideas, and expectations. The husband must make the effort to understand his wife's different needs and style of communication and he must take initiative in establishing and maintaining effective communication.

1. She says, "You never talk to me!" (*He thinks, "I want to, but I really don't know what to say or how to say it."*) He says, "Uh."
2. She asks, "What are we going to do about XYZ?" (*He thinks, "I'm not sure what will happen when I talk to the bank, but we need to wait and see if the money comes from the insurance company, so until we know about that we'll have to do..."*) ..He says, "Nothing!"
3. The factors that work against effective communication must be recognized and you must find effective ways to overcome poor communication and establish understanding.

III. The Husband is the head - the leader - by taking the initiative. Much has been made of the biblical imperative that the husband is the head of the wife and the representative of God's authority in the relationship. We must keep in mind that God established His authority by creating, providing, and sustaining. Jesus established His authority by giving Himself sacrificially for the church. The husband must likewise establish his godly authority by giving of himself in caring, sacrificial love for his wife and his family.

- A. Husband is the prophet (representing God to the family), the priest (representing the family to God), and the king (God's ordained authority) to his family.
- B. God's Word teaches that the husband must rule his own house, take the oversight, exercise godly leadership. This in no way implies that he is to be harsh, excessively demanding, or dictatorial. He is to lead by taking initiative. He is to rule by first ruling himself. He is to take the oversight by thinking, praying, and taking the initiative to produce a family that honors God. God looks for these qualities in a man before giving spiritual responsibility and authority. (Genesis 18:19; 1 Timothy 3:4-5)

- C. Here are some of the areas in which the husband must take the initiative as a godly leader in his home and family:
1. In problem solving and dealing with conflicts and pressures both inside and outside the home. Financial issues, relationship problems, schedule conflicts.
 2. In communication, in settling differences, offences. "You may be right. I was wrong. I'm sorry."
 3. In the example he sets for his family and others:
 - a. Christian character: godly values, commitment to Christ, to the local church, respect for authority.
 - b. Fairness in dealing with his children, fairness in discipline, fairness in resolving conflicts, fairness with those outside the family. (Ephesians 6:4)
 - c. Consistency: in his own personal life, in the discipline within the home, in the care given to others.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

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1. How have the accepted roles of husbands and wives changed today in comparison with how they were perceived in Bible days or even in the early part of this century? Have these changes been good or bad? Does this make it easier or more difficult to be a godly husband today? Why do you think so?
2. What are some of the key things a husband must do in order to be able to fulfill his God-ordained role in the family and yet still have a family that can live in the modern world?