

# Sacrificial Love:

## A Husband's God-given Power to Transform his Marriage

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

The last time we met, we discussed a recipe for healthy and prosperous family relationships. We concluded that to make a healthy relationship, you must follow the recipe of being filled with the Holy Spirit. What Paul tells us to do here requires the Holy Spirit's impact and influence in our lives.

Sometimes it's hard for the Holy Spirit to fill us when we're so full of ourselves. So we have to ask him to empty us before there's room for the Holy Spirit to fill us. As a result, more of us are not full because we have yet to be emptied.

## Marriage and Family in Today's Society

So our generation is witnessing the death of marriage and the family as we've known it. Strong voices are crying out that the institution of marriage needs a reformation. These voices are screaming that we need open marriages and non-marriages, same-sex marriages. People are groping today without any base of authority to try to find out how to make meaningful relationships in a disintegrating society.

But understand, and this is critical, society will crumble if we don't preserve the family. Because the family, by God's design, is to be the basic building block of society. As the family goes, so goes the nation. Plain and simple. Marriage is more than a good idea. It's God's idea. It is. That's why it's under so much attack today. You know, the do-away-with-God mentality of our age can't stand any of His ideas. If his name is attached to it, the culture that we live in really doesn't want anything to do with it. They shake their fists in the face of God and declare that we don't need His input in the courtroom, the classroom, and especially in the bedroom.

## Marriage and the Church

But to me, the real question isn't, will the institution of marriage survive in America? Here's the question: will it survive in the church? You have to wonder how many Christian couples have contributed to the divorce rate in our country. Do you know as many Christians are getting divorced as people in the world?

Let's face it; marriage is hard. Oh, I know when you fall in love. It's ooey and gooey and just wonderful. You get the tingles and the shivers. It's kind of like the flu.

But marriage is hard. Joanna called her minister in a panic three weeks after her wedding day. I mean, she was a real mess. She was hysterical. She said, "Pastor, John and I had our first fight, and it was awful. What am I going to do?"

"Calm down, Joanna," the pastor said as he leaned back in his chair and kind of smiled. "This isn't nearly as bad as you think. Every marriage has to have its first fight. It's natural."

"Oh, I know, I know," she said impatiently, "but what am I going to do with the body?"

Yeah. Marriage. It's hard. It can kill you, and I guarantee, by God's design, that's what He wants it to do. He wants it to kill you. And I'll explain that as we go along.

## A Husband's Sacrificial Love

Let's target the husbands this morning. "Husbands love your wives." One day, like it or not, we as husbands will have to stand before God as the CEO of our families and give an account of how we've managed our homes. Husbands are to love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her. That's an amazing statement.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, he proved his love for the Church. He loved it enough to leave heaven, take on human form, be spit on, and be mocked, abused, and pierced. He loved the church enough to die for her and my friend. That's the definition of sacrificial love.

Something to note about sacrificial love: it's always undeserved and offered unconditionally. No soul on the planet deserved the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

## How to Show Sacrificial Love

God isn't interested in rescuing people who deserve rescue because none of us do. He's saving those who don't deserve it. Why? Because it's his nature. God is love. Sacrificial love is generated through grace and expressed through mercy. It's not based on your performance. And aren't you glad of that? God never says, you know, I'll love you if, or I'll love you when."

If the quality of love you offer is based upon measuring up to certain standards, it ceases to be sacrificial and becomes conditional.

God has never called the husband to love his wife with anything less than sacrificial love. Paul didn't write here; hey, husbands, love your wives whenever you think she deserves it or if she measures up to your standard of excellence. Truthfully, some husbands demand a perfection that not even God requires.

Conditional love enslaves. Sacrificial love liberates because it says even though you're flawed, you're still perfectly beautiful in my sight. And even though you've got these imperfections, I still love you with all my heart. That is the very love of God. Husbands, we will never know how to love until we've sacrificed ourselves, crucified ourselves, and died to ourselves. That's what sacrificial love is all about.

## The Groom's Marriage Vow: I'm Done

It's a wise groom who has to be dragged to the altar. Why? Because he knows what love is. It's death. The bride should say, I do, and the groom should say, I'm done. It's true. Never again will you have your own way. You can't be happy if the other person is miserable, no matter who wins the battle in a marriage, guys. You lose the war.

You may have a little heated debate as a husband and wife, and you feel pretty good. You took your shots, felt like a victor, and walked out in the male ego. Boy, you gave her a jab. Not literally a jab, but boy, that was a good shot. You

had all the right things to say. You said them. You felt good about yourself, and you think you won.

Oh, guys, think again. As long as you're looking for what you can get out of the marriage, you will never know what it truly means to love your wife as Christ loved the church.

When was the last time that you made a sacrifice for your wife? Think about that for just a second. Make a sacrifice. I started thinking about the Tabernacle and the Old Testament when I wrote that. Make a sacrifice, or you just might get a burnt offering for supper.

Self-centeredness is the number one killer of marriages today. Guys, let me ask you a personal question. Are you a romantic? Mm. Are you a creative thinker? Ways of showing your wife affection. Do you do things spur of the moment? Spontaneously? You just are generated by this overwhelming affection for your wife. And so you do stuff like that. Keep looking this way. Keep looking this way.

Or are you like the fellow who put an ad in his local paper that read like this? "Wanted: a good woman who can clean and cook fish, dig worms. So... and owns a fishing boat and motor. Please include a photo... of the boat and motor."

You know, if the spark has gone out of your marriage, make a date with your wife and go look for it. Or, you know, Pastor, it's not like it was early on. The flames have just... Hey, you got to fire it up. You got to work at it. Marriage takes work. It really does.

Jesus loved the church. He gave himself for it. Why? That he might sanctify and cleanse her. The word sanctify here means to be set apart for special attention. Guys, does your wife have your special and unique attention, or is she always in competition with something or someone else for just some quality time alone with you? We usually talk about our kids wanting quality time with us, and we have to ensure they get that. But, you know, our wives need that as well.

## A Husband's Purifying Love

The husband's love for his wife isn't only to be sacrificial; it needs to be a purifying love as well. Here's a fundamental and biblical truth: when you love someone, their purity is your goal. You would never compromise her convictions. You would never violate her integrity because you love and put her first.

Christ loved his church, so he wanted to purify his people. He wants us to be clean: without spot or wrinkle. Isn't that the kind of church that Jesus is coming back for? When He saves you by his blood, He cleanses you from every sin. He cleanses you so completely that the Bible says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He removed your sin as far as the east is from the west. And then He cast them into the depths of the sea to be remembered no more. If you love your wife, you will do everything in your power to maintain her holiness, value, and purity. Every day that you live, true love always seeks to purify.

To any young ladies who might be listening who aren't married yet, if a man ever comes along and tells you that he loves you and tries to rob you of your virtue, that is not love. Don't buy into that lie. I know what our culture says, but that is not love. Love lifts up, purifies, exalts, honors, and makes holy.

Husbands, if we love our wife, let's seek to lift her up, draw her to God, pour virtue into her, and point her to Christ in all we do. Be an example to her. Just don't pray for her. Pray with her. Invest in her, thoughtfully care for her.

Jesus sanctified and cleansed his church. Why? Listen. That he might present her to himself, a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

## Men vs. Women

The Bible makes it clear that God created man and woman. Everyone knows men and women aren't the same. At least we used to know that. It's getting so muddy out there anymore, things we just took for granted as common sense. But God made man and woman, and both share the same image of God. We certainly look at the world differently, don't we? One of the significant differences is the way that we handle stress. And please, I don't like blanket

statements, and I'm getting ready to make a bunch of them. So if you disagree, say, "That's okay, that's Pastor." So here we go.

When a man gets stressed, he'll call time out to be alone. He heads off to the locker room. Almost all men seek out their private cave when their soul is in trouble. "I need to be by myself. The last thing I want to do is talk about it. I do not." And so if your husband is having a bad day and he comes in, and you say, "Honey, do you want to talk about it?" "I don't want to talk about it." "Why don't you want to talk about it?" "Is it me?" "No."

If he doesn't want to talk about it, don't talk about it. But just give him some time, give him some space. Men need that. So they can work it out.

Women, on the other hand, in the process of working through a problem or dealing with stress, need to express their feelings and share their emotions. If they don't vent, let me tell you something. There's going to be an explosion, and guys, you're going to be cleaning up a mess.

Men have locker rooms. We can go off and be by ourselves. Women don't have locker rooms. They have bathrooms. And when they're having a tough time, they need some fellowship and company. They need a group hug.

## Supporting Your Wife's Emotional Needs

Like waves in the ocean, women's feelings about themselves and life generally reach high tide and low, and most of us guys don't understand that emotional roller coaster. So, test the waters when you wake up or come home at night to see your sweetheart's mood.

Let me tell you something else. Those mood swings in a woman's life are absolutely normal. What was God thinking? I mean, He made women like that. Why couldn't God have had a committee meeting, brought some guys into a conference room, and said, What do you think about this idea of these mood swings and women? I would have told God what I thought about that because I would have just said, "Painful."

When a man is stressed, he thinks, Leave me alone. I don't want to talk about it. When a woman is stressed, she's got to get it off her heart. She's got to let it go and shed some tears.

The bottom line is we cannot force women to stifle their God-given emotions. When they do, what happens? They're plagued with all these inner wrinkles and blemishes. And when they can't feel good about themselves, we are heading for a disaster. They need a sounding board, someone who will sit down and listen and try. and underline the word try, to understand with a loving and sympathetic heart.

Let me say this to you guys, too. Better to be a sounding board than a dart board. Take some time. Sit down. Calm yourself down and try, with the help of God, to tune in.

## How Can a Husband Do All of This?

So like most of us, I need the Holy Spirit to help me. I need the fullness and the anointing of the Holy Spirit on Monday just as much as we do on Sunday in our practical family lives to be anointed by God. Lord, touch my eyes.

In closing, let's reflect on God's profound view of women. He commands us to respect and honor them, lifting them up in our marriages. As husbands, we must submit to their needs, even if it requires sacrificing our own desires. Our goal should be to help them maintain purity, holiness, and sanctification, ensuring they remain free from blemishes. It's not about superficial cover-ups but a profound transformation that takes place within their character. God assigned this role to husbands as a glorious reflection of Jesus' love for His Church.

Can we accomplish this on our own? Absolutely not. Just as Jesus offered himself on the cross through the influence of the Holy Spirit, we, too, need the Holy Spirit's guidance and power to fully give ourselves to our wives and die to our self-centeredness. With the Spirit's influence, we can sacrificially love our wives 24/7, just as Jesus sacrifices for his church. It's a constant commitment and a continuous act of selflessness.