

# Husbands, Love Your Wives

by Chip Ingram

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*Husbands are called to love their wives unconditionally, sacrificially, intentionally, and with sensitivity, just as Christ loves the church.*

**Scripture:** Ephesians 5:25, Ephesians 5:28-29

**Topics:** "Marriage And Love", "Christlike Leadership"

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## Description

Chip Ingram preaches on the biblical command for husbands to love their wives sacrificially, intentionally, and with sensitivity, drawing parallels to Christ's love for the church. The ultimate goal is to help wives reach their full potential and become all God designed them to be, just as Christ desired to present the church as radiant and glorious. Husbands are called to lead in a way that enhances their wives' beauty, freedom, and development of gifts, mirroring Christ's care for the church.

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## Transcript

"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." ~ Ephesians 5:25-26

The last part of this verse is a picture of what happened at salvation, the regeneration. The church came to Christ by the word. This word is rhema rather than logos. It presents the idea that Christ loved the church radically, died on the cross, and rose from the dead. When the gospel is preached through the spoken word, people come to Christ. When people come to Christ they are "born again;" they become holy. God in Christ wanted to draw us to Himself but He wanted to make us like Him. Christ's purpose in cleansing the church was to present her to himself as a radiant church. The ultimate goal wasn't just to save the church but to make her radiant, glorious and beautiful so that she could reach her full potential.

Men, this is God's model for what we are to do for our wives. Make her radiant, make her glorious, lead in such a way that she is lifted up, so that what we do causes her to be enhanced in beauty, freedom, and the development of her gifts.

"In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." Ephesians 5:28. We ought to love our wives as part of ourselves. Every time you hurt your wife, you hurt yourself. Every time you are selfish and want your own way, you hurt yourself along with your bride. He who loves his wife loves himself.

This is a strong command, but it also has great rewards. When you learn to lead in such a way that makes following a delight, "submission" won't be even be an issue in your house.

Paul goes on to say in verse 29, "After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds, and cares for it, just as Christ does the church." The application is that we need to be devoted to our wives and provide for them emotionally, spiritually, and physically. This means "to provide for the development of and to attain the health of." That's what we are to do as men. Not only feed, but care for. Not just provide for, but cherish. The word "care" literally means to keep warm, to protect. How do you keep your wife warm? How do you keep the flame burning? How do you live with her in such a sensitive way that the light keeps glowing brightly? We do it as Christ loved the church, for we are members of His body.

So men, the command is not hard to understand, but it's tremendously hard to do. It is to love your wife unconditionally. Christ's purpose was to secure the bride of Christ for himself and to bring the church to full development. Our purpose in loving our wives is to help them become all God designed them to be. You don't love her in order to get your way, you don't love her to eliminate hassles, you don't love her in such a way that everything is calm all the time. You love her so that she is able to be, in every way, what God designed her to be.

What Does This Mean?

Husbands must love sacrificially

Love your wife in a way that cost you something significant and precious. Don't love her with leftovers. On one occasion I walked out of the middle of an NBA All Star Game, right at the half-time slam-dunk contest, because I was sensing a prompting from God that Theresa needed to know that she mattered more than the game. It sounded little, but it was a big deal for me.

I said, "Hey, honey, you want to go get a cup of coffee and take a walk, just talk?"

She looked at me, "Isn't that the NBA All Star Game with Michael Jordan?"

"Yes."

"Are you kidding?"

"No."

And then she just beamed.

Have you ever had your wife call you at work with a problem, when you could just sense her desperation? I don't mean that I run home all the time, but there have been times that I could tell, just from the tone of her voice, that this was serious. Those are the times I tell her I'll be home in a minute, and I am. Appointments can be rescheduled, but that moment can't be.

There are times when we need to communicate to our wives that they are more important than work, more important than hobbies, more important than us, more important than the kids. They matter most. We need to let them know that we are willing to sacrifice the most precious things we have: time, energy and money for them. It will produce a tremendous security and joy, in the long run, for both of you.

Husbands must love their wives intentionally

We are to help our wives develop. We talk a lot about discipleship in the church today, but the number-one person you need to disciple as a mutual co-heir of God's grace is your wife. Of course, you will really be discipling each other, but the point is that it needs to be done. Take the initiative to study with, pray with, and talk with your wife.

Some of you men are great at creating business plans. You visualize the target, establish a goal, and organize a strategy to meet that goal. When was the last time you considered your wife's growth and development with that same intentionality? Have you thought about how God might want her to grow, and what plans you might need to make, what time you might have to block off, in order to help her develop in those areas?

I remember about eighteen years ago we were in seminary and were having difficulty regularly keeping up with all the friends we'd left behind, so Theresa wrote a one-page Christmas letter. I remember picking it up and reading it, and saying, "Honey, did you write this?"

She said yes, and I asked her if she had seen it in a magazine. "No," she said with a smile.

"Honey, you are good! You can say more in one page than I can say in four. It's clear, it's theological, and it's tender. You've got a gift here."

"Well of course you'd say that," she said, "you are my husband." But from that day on I decided I was going to come up with a plan to help my wife use and develop her communication skills. We read books on it, discussed it, and whenever she had a chance to speak in front of fifteen women, I encouraged her to do it. She was almost always nervous about it, but I would encourage her. The fruit of that, eighteen years later, is that my wife is a wonderful writer and a strong communicator. The only thing she ever lacked was confidence, not the gift.

What is it that your wife does well? What would happen if you got on her team and told her you want to help her become all that God wants her to be? That's what it means to love with 'intentionality.'

Husbands need to love their wives with sensitivity

This is where those little phrases "care for her, cherish her, keep her warm, nourish her spiritual, emotional and physical needs" come into play. Wives, you have no idea how hard this is for us as men to do.

We don't even know what you need sometimes - things like talking, listening, going on dates, planning weekends away, don't come naturally to many of us. But if we've learned anything of value from this past decade, it's the value of the strong, sensitive, tender man. We've exchanged John Wayne for Mel Gibson, and in terms of romantic role models, we've traded up.

What it doesn't mean

It doesn't mean you always do what your wife wants

You don't always do what she wants; you do what she needs. I wrote that on a three-by-five card one time because I was having such a hard time holding to it. It's so much easier, and feels so much better, short term, to simply please her. But if pleasing her is not in step with our Lord, the Choreographer's, design, it's not the right thing to do. I've had to tell my wife, "No, our son can't go to the prom. We set the rules and

conditions and he broke them."

It doesn't mean you don't have a life of your own

The point here is not to add fifteen or twenty hours to your week. You should not abandon all hope of having a life of your own; you've still got to work out a couple of times a week, have some male friends. "Loving sacrificially" doesn't mean you never see another football game.

It doesn't mean that you make her dependent on you. She needs a life of her own. Maybe she needs to take some risks, to get out there and do some things, and you need to encourage her in that. Don't smother her. Remember, it's about dancing together and being so in tune with the divine Choreographer that you just make it easy for your partner to follow.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chip-ingram/husbands-love-your-wives/>

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