

Understanding Marriage - the Shared Life

by David Guzik

A Christian marriage is built on a self-sacrificing love that puts the wife's needs before one's own, as demonstrated by Jesus' love for the church.

Duration: 34:14

Scripture: Ephesians 5:25

Topics: "Love and Sacrifice", "Marriage"

Description

David Guzik emphasizes the profound nature of marriage as a shared life, drawing parallels between the relationship of husbands and wives and that of Christ and the church. He highlights that true Christian marriage is founded on self-sacrificial love, as exemplified by Jesus, who loved the church despite its imperfections. Guzik challenges husbands to love their wives with the same depth and commitment that Christ has for His church, urging them to take the initiative in nurturing their relationship. He also stresses the importance of mutual submission and shared life, where both partners actively engage in each other's lives and support one another. Ultimately, Guzik calls for a deeper understanding of both marital and spiritual relationships, encouraging believers to embrace the excitement of their union with Christ.

Transcript

The text before us is Ephesians chapter 5 beginning at verse 25. I'll read through the whole text and then we'll take a look and examine some of the prominent themes. We're not able this morning to really go phrase by phrase and make a careful examination of everything in the text.

We'll have to save that for this week and the next and even beyond two weeks after today, but this morning we can take a look at some of the major themes in this passage. Ephesians chapter 5 verse 25. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it just as the Lord does the church. We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. This is an amazing

passage from the book of Ephesians speaking to us about marriage and most specifically the husband's role and duty in the marital relationship.

What I think is significant about this is that it's so different than what we usually read in books or hear in many teachings about marriage today. As I've had the opportunity to read a lot of books that you might find in a Christian bookstore or messages that you might read from Christian ministries regarding marriage today, many of them seem to ignore what I think are the most important foundational aspects for a Christian marriage. In other words, they're filled with great advice.

Have a date night every week. Be nicer to each other. Develop communication skills and all those things are wonderful and necessary for a healthy marriage, but they're not the foundation for a really Christian marriage.

The foundation for a Christian marriage is found for us in this text right here. Maybe we should remember the context by which Paul comes to this topic. He's been talking to us in the broader context of life in the Spirit.

What does it mean to have the Spirit of God in your life and to live a life that's really dominated by the Holy Spirit? The first thing he mentioned was in verse 19. He said a life in the Spirit will be a life dominated by praise. You want to worship God.

He secondly says in verse 20 that life in the Spirit will be dominated by an attitude of thanksgiving. You'll have a gratitude in your heart towards the Lord. Then he says in verse 21 that life in the Spirit will be marked by a heart of submission and a mutual submission one to another.

And then he begins in the marital relationship to describe a relationship in which there's a special duty for submission and he brings up the place of submission that wives have in the marital relationship. That's in verses 22, 23, and 24. And we spoke about this in previous weeks.

I'd recommend the tape to you if you'd like to hear some of that teaching in greater depth. But Paul knows that you can't speak to the wives about what they need to focus on without also speaking to the husbands. Otherwise somebody would get the idea that marriage is just a one-way street and that only one partner has the obligations.

Only one partner has the responsibilities. Paul doesn't want anybody to be left with that impression. And so yes, he spoke to the wife because the general context was submission.

But after dealing with the wives, then he focuses in on the husbands. And in verse 25 he says, husbands, love your wives. That's challenging enough in and of itself.

Especially when we took a look last week at what it means to love. I mean, it's not just the kind of love that the world talks about. He's not talking about that the romantic violins playing in the background and the beautiful music and all just the very emotional kind of love.

That love is wonderful and precious and it has its place in the marital relationship. But what Paul's talking about is a kind of love described by the ancient Greek word *agape*. And it has at its root a self-sacrifice, a self-giving.

And he says, now listen, husbands, love your wives. But now Paul takes it in the next few words in verse 25 and lifts it up to an entirely different level. Look at it there.

It's amazing. He says, verse 25, husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. Those words, words which should haunt every man, every husband here this morning, are those words, just as.

In other words, he says, here's a pattern for you. Here's an example. Jesus has a relationship with his people, with the church.

And just as Jesus loves the church, husbands, that's how you're supposed to love your wives. He's saying, this is an illustration. Here's a picture of relationship, the relationship between Jesus and his people.

And I want your marriage to illustrate that relationship. Staggering thing. This takes the marriage relationship and utterly transforms it.

It makes the Christian marriage completely different. Paul didn't write, now you two start getting along, or have a date night every week, or now you both have to give a little bit more and be nicer to each other. All of those things might be great and it would be an improvement in marriage for probably many of us.

But they don't come close to fulfilling the high place that God has for the Christian marriage. You see, what Paul is saying is he's saying, listen, here's your relationship to where it is and here's where you're at with yourself. You see your deficiencies, your faults, your failures, you're critical towards one another.

Both of you, you're standing on your own rights. You condemn and you quarrel and you're separate. You may live together, but you're separate under the same roof.

And why? It's because you have not remembered your own relationship with Jesus Christ and use that as the model upon which to build your marital relationship. You see, there's many things you can do in the marital relationship. Good things.

Sort of the list of handy hints to improve your marriage. Wonderful things. But you need to get back to that foundation.

You need to look at the relationship between Jesus and his church and you need to let that be the model, let that be your example for the marital relationship. And so that's why he says in verse 25, husbands love your wives, this is Christ also love the church, and gave himself for it. You see those words? Just as in verse 28 he says, so husbands ought to love his own wives.

In other words, so after the pattern of Jesus. And then in verse 29 he says, for no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it just as the Lord does the church. Here you go again, the just as stated for us again.

There's a pattern given to us, a pattern for the husband's love to the wife and a pattern for the entire marriage relationship. You know what I think is amazing about this passage is, this is a passage which more than many passages in the Bible teaches us on two different tracks. Because first of all, it teaches us about the marital relationship.

It says here, let me teach you about the marital relationship by showing you the relationship between Jesus and the church. But as it shows us the relationship between Jesus and the church, it teaches us about that as well. So you see, there's something for everybody to grab hold of this morning.

Maybe you're married, maybe you're not married, maybe you'll never be married. Yet this message has application to you because you need to have, if you don't already, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And this tells you what kind of relationship Jesus wants to have with you.

You see, many people have distant and cold and separate lives kind of marriages, and that's the kind of relationship they have with Jesus Christ as well. He doesn't want it to be that way on either scene. Look at it first of all, how he describes the attitude that Jesus has towards the church.

That's our pattern. Verse 25, what's he say? Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church. Jesus loves the church.

He loves his people. Now, when you think of God's people together before standing before Jesus, and you can think of yourself as an individual or yourself as the great company of believers, they're standing before God. When you think of that and think of Jesus's love towards the church, we know why Jesus loves the church, right? It's because the church is so perfect.

It's because the church is so committed to him and never fails him and never lets him down. It's because the church, individual Christians are in perfect submission to the Lord Jesus. And we know that that's the reason why, right? Well, of course not.

Why does he love the church? He loves the church despite the church's failings, despite the church's sins. You see, this is love given to the undeserving. Now, husbands, here's where it gets challenging.

That's your pattern for loving your wife. You've been standing back thinking you've been justified in having a hardened attitude towards your wife. Why? Well, because she deserves it.

I mean, look at it. Look at how she is, right? And you could go on and on and on. And of course, you begin to exaggerate and create things.

But let's say you're not. Let's say you're totally on the mark. Let's say the wife is totally undeserving of your love.

God would look you square in the eye this morning and say, so what? Love her as Jesus loves the church. That really doesn't give us any ground to stand on, does it? It doesn't give us any ground to excuse, to justify hardness of heart or bitterness towards our wives. No, none at all.

They could be the most undeserving wives in the world where they could have a contest for undeserving wives and they could be the champion. It's irrelevant, isn't it? Because the church is undeserving of the love of Jesus Christ, yet he gives it just the same. We have to completely remove this idea of deserving from it.

It also shows us that God wants marriages to be full of love, doesn't it? But loveless marriage doesn't please God. It doesn't fulfill his purpose. God wants marriages to be full of love, full of that compassion, full of that care one for another.

It also shows us that the love that Jesus has towards the church is love that's given first. It gives first in the initiative. Husbands may be standing back and saying, well, I'm ready to love my wife as soon as she softens up a bit, as soon as she changes her attitude.

No, you go in there and you take the initiative, husband. What does the Bible say about our love relationship with Jesus Christ? It says, we love him because he first loved us. So husband, get out there and take the initiative and demonstrate love towards your wife.

And I know what you're thinking. You're saying, well, listen, I've tried to do that and that love has been rejected. I've tried to do things and she's thrown it back in my face.

Well, go back to the love of Jesus for his church. Don't we, as Christians, sometimes reject the love of Jesus as it's offered to us? You know, we sing that song sometimes. It's a beautiful song.

In the chorus, too, it goes, oh Lord, I receive your love. Because we need to receive the love of Jesus, don't we? And sometimes, as it were, Jesus is trying to pour out his love upon us and we're pushing it away for whatever reason. Sometimes we're just in a bad mood.

Sometimes we demand to feel worthy of his love before we'll receive it. And sometimes we do all those things and we need to consciously receive the love of Jesus. But even when we reject his love, he still brings it forth, doesn't he? He still brings it out.

Husbands, this is high ground for us to walk on, right? I don't know if there's a man here among us who can say, well, yes, I live all this. Can we go on to something else? I fill all these check marks. No, this is very high ground for us to achieve.

But certainly it's the ground that the Lord calls us to. You see, it's not only attitude that's described in verse 25. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church.

No, if I could say, and just from a, you know, sort of a selfish male perspective, it gets worse in the end part of verse 25, where he won't relegate it just the attitude of attitude. He says it has to do with action. Look at it there, verse 25.

Husband, love your wives as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. That's Jesus's action towards the church. Oh, how we wish that the love could just be, you know, the feeling in our heart or a kindness that we show here and there.

No, but what agape love is all about is about self-sacrificing love. And this is what the world, this is what our popular culture doesn't understand at all. You know, when our popular culture speaks about love and they speak about love so much in the movies and in the songs and in television programs, everything, you'd think the popular culture, well, they're experts on love, right? Everybody knows all about love for all they talk about it, for all they seem to understand it, for all that, but they don't understand anything about love.

They'll talk about love and how wonderful the love is and this and that and the next thing the love is gone, it's disappeared. It's because they don't know anything about love. They don't understand love as it is in agape love and that is self-sacrificing love.

But Jesus knew what it was to sacrifice. He said, verse 25, he gave himself for it. That's what love really is.

That's how it acts out in the marital relationship, when the husband will deny himself, will sacrifice himself with a self-sacrificing love for the sake of his wife. You want to see how this worked out in the life of Jesus? Well, keep a finger there in Ephesians chapter 5. Turn ahead just a few pages in your Bible to Philippians chapter 2. Philippians is the book immediately after Ephesians and in Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 through 8, we find this dramatic statement from the pen of the Apostle Paul where he says, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Well, how about that for a pattern for husbands? You see that? Take a look at it there. Verse 5 again of Philippians chapter 2, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation. In other words, he lowered himself.

Husbands, you need to get off your high horse and get down on the same level as your wife and be there as her partner. That's what Jesus did. He left the glory of heaven to come and let go of all of his reputation, all of his status, and come and to be right there next to his bride who he would take unto himself.

And then if you notice, he took the form of a bond-servant. That's how he came. Not as a Lord to say, hey everybody obey me, everybody serve me.

No, he came to serve instead. And then he humbled himself and he was obedient to God even to the point of death, the death of the cross. That's a self-sacrificing love described in the strongest of terms.

That's what it means for a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church. It's not a matter of just warm feelings. It's a matter of self-sacrificing love.

You see, the focus of Jesus was on the church. It was for the church that he did what he did. It wasn't for himself.

He was buying her. He was purchasing her. He was thinking of nobody but the church.

It was not thinking about himself. He was thinking of her. And that's what husbands need to be able to communicate to their wives.

I'm thinking of you. I'm caring for you. And when we read all this and we think about the depths of love that Jesus showed and how this is the pattern for husbands, I wouldn't blame a few husbands out there for sort of thinking, man this is a raw deal.

I mean I thought it was going pretty good when we were in verse 22 of Ephesians chapter 5 where it said, wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. I was saying amen right along with that one. And that was right.

That was good. And then in verse 23 it says that the husband's the head of the wife. Well yes, amen the husband says.

See I'm the head right? That's what the husband's saying. I thought God said I was the head of the home. Well you are the head.

Well I thought God said that my wife was supposed to submit to me. She is supposed to submit to you. Then why do I have to lay down my life and sacrifice? Why do I have to humble myself and give away my high-minded reputation and be a servant? I thought I was in charge.

Well you see there's only one answer to that husband. You understand headship and submission in a very worldly way. You don't understand it in a godly way at all.

You see worldly headship says I'm your head so you have to take your orders from me and do whatever I want you to do. Godly headship says I am your head so I must care for you and serve you. Worldly submission says you must submit to me so here are the things I want you to do for me.

Godly submission says you must submit to me so I am accountable before God for you. I must care for you and serve you. You see the difference? This is not the height of romantic love as the world knows it.

No, no, this is a different kind of love than the world knows. You know the world knows romantic love based on looks and image and the ability to be suave and cool and wonderful and all these great romantic things. The problem with that is that some men aren't really capable of it, are they? I mean they try their best but they're never going to match up with the image of the fellow on the TV who has especially all the special lighting and the cameras and the makeup person and all that and you know they can put the music in the background and music doesn't follow you around everywhere you go and you know look at the car he drives and the restaurant he takes the woman to and good heavens you know that and they're never showing him pay the bill and all of that business.

You know we just can't match this worldly image of romance that's presented to us. You can't live up to it. But friends, every one of us as men can fulfill this role of sacrificial love.

Doesn't matter how you look. Isn't that refreshing for us men? You don't have to worry about how you look or any of those things that's irrelevant to this. Every one of us as men can fulfill this role of having a self-sacrificing love towards our wife.

We can fulfill this role that Jesus speaks about. Now there's several ways that this love expresses itself. It expresses itself first of all in the way that Jesus chose his bride.

That's what we need to do as husbands, right? Express to our wives that they're chosen. I mean that's what Jesus did when when he saw us when he put his affection upon us. He chose us.

Do you understand that Jesus chose you before you chose him? He spoke to your heart before you ever answered back to his heart. And that's how it is in the marital relationship. A husband, he sets his affection on one woman and he says, I choose you.

One woman out of every other woman on this earth. He says, I choose you. It doesn't say I choose you and you and you.

No, it's one. I choose you. And when the husband does that choosing and the husband and the wife both, they're no longer free to do some of the things they did before.

The wife is to live for the husband and the husband's to live for the wife. The husband's not to look at other women because the bride, his bride is the one that he selected. He separated her unto himself.

That's how Jesus looks at the church. That's how husbands must look at their wives. Any way that a husband can communicate to his wife, I choose you.

He needs to communicate. Jesus demonstrated his love to his bride in a significant once-for-all time action and that was when he died on the cross. As husbands, we do the same thing.

You could call it the marriage ceremony, right? That's why weddings are important. That's why marriage ceremonies are important. It's a time of declaration where the husband says, hey, I'm not ashamed.

I'll say it publicly. I'll say it before witnesses. This is the woman I've chosen.

By the way, that's why marriages are important and marriage ceremonies are important. Some people want to duck the legality of marriage and just say, well, we'll be married before God. No, that doesn't count.

They say, well, what if we were on a desert island and there was no law courts or there was no pastor to marry us? And I say, well, then fine. You can be married before God when you're on the desert island, but you're not on a desert island right now. You live in Ventura County, California, and there's a way you can get a marriage license.

We'll fix it all up for you. You can leave the desert island scenario for the desert island, but right now there's a way that you can declare, just as Jesus declared, I choose this woman. I choose her to be mine.

Jesus also cherishes his bride. If you notice in verse 29 of Ephesians chapter 5, Paul writes, he says, no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just as the Lord does the church. A husband must cherish his wife as Jesus cherishes his bride.

You know, that word cherishes, it really has the idea of an affectionate care. It means that he cares for, he looks after, he guards his wife. And that's the sort of affectionate care that a husband should be given to the wife.

You see, this is the true understanding of the marital relationship that a husband should have towards his wife. Now, there's another great aspect that I'd like to touch on in the last few minutes that we're here together with. Really, there's so much more that we need to talk about regarding this passage, and we will talk about it next week and in the week after.

But what I want to talk about is how this reflects for us in the marital relationship what Jesus shares with his bride. You see, this is really, again, a teaching on two tracks. It shows us the glory of the Christian marriage, but it also shows us the glory of the Christian life.

I think it's often because we don't appreciate one that we don't appreciate the other. And one of the fundamental truths of the Christian life is that it must be lived as a shared life, as a life shared with Jesus Christ. We should all understand that together, because sometimes we don't.

Sometimes people accept Jesus, but they don't want to share Jesus's life. They accept Jesus in the way that you might accept a soda pop. Now, you see the advertisements on television for this soda pop or that soda pop, and they say, take this soda pop, and they show all the people in the crowd.

They're all having fun. Wow, are they having fun. More fun than people should be allowed to have, they're having.

And oh, look, they're just so happy. And the whole message is this. If you accept this soda pop, if you take it, look at what it will add to your life.

Now, you're not expected to live your life around that soda pop. You're just expected to buy it. You buy it, it'll add something to your life.

You know, that's the way a lot of people approach Jesus. I'll accept Jesus, I'll come to him, and he'll add something wonderful to my life. But live my life around him? Share my life with his? No, what are you talking about? You see, Jesus wants to go far, far beyond just this idea of coming into our life to add something good.

He wants to share his life with us. He says in the Word, he says, I in you and you in me. This idea of a shared life with Jesus Christ is very powerful.

Now, it's powerful as it is in the Christian life, but it's also powerful as it relates to the married life, because what Jesus shares with his bride relates to marriage. You see, as we illustrate this, we need to remember that husbands must take the initiative in this shared life. Some don't.

You see, what some husbands communicate to their wives is, listen, wife, I'll live my life and you live yours. I mean, I want us to get along just fine. I want us to enjoy each other's company and all.

I'll be nice to you, you be nice to me. But your life is yours, my life is mine, that's how it's going to be. Now, let me ask you, could you imagine Jesus speaking to his people that way? It's incomprehensible, isn't it? Jesus looks to his people and he says, I want you to share my life.

Here's my life, I want you to share in it. Come, come, be a part of my life. The things that I want to accomplish, I want you to be there accomplishing them with me.

My goals, my aspirations, I want you to take and come to share my life. That's what Jesus says to his people. That's what the husband needs to say to his wife.

And again, it also means that the wives must respond to the shared life. Some don't. Some look to the husband and they say, well, look, you can come share my life.

The husband says, well, no, no, that's not the pattern here. And some wives don't, just as some Christians show little interest in a shared life with Jesus. I mean, for some Christians, their idea of the Christian life is that Jesus is there to help them live their lives.

That the main job of is to support them and help them fulfill their own agenda. But Jesus says, come to me and share my life. So the wife must come into the husband and share his life.

And he needs to have that care and that concern for his wife. You see how this works out in the relationship with Jesus and his bride. I mean, Jesus, first of all, he shares his name with his bride, doesn't he? He gives us his name.

And so we do the same thing in our marriages, right? In a marriage ceremony, the wife takes on the name of the husband. He put his name upon us as believers. Well, there's no greater compliment than can be paid.

And in the same way, when a woman gets married, she gives up her name and she takes on the name of her husband. It's biblical. It's the custom of the whole world.

It teaches us that the relationship between the husband and the wife, it follows this pattern. You see here, Jesus gives us his name. But more than that, far more than that, in the broadest kind of way, you can say that Jesus shares his life with his bride.

So husbands, we have to share our life with our wife. When a man marries a woman, he no longer is to live just unto himself. He's invited this woman to come in and share his life.

And so Jesus shares his life with his people. Now, husbands, let's be very honest here. There may be some men out here.

Let me speak, first of all, to a single man here, perhaps. And you, as a single man, you're saying, you know what? I don't know that I want some woman to share my life. I like living my life the way I want to live it and only being concerned about myself and thinking about that.

And I can think of a lot of good things that a woman could add to my life, but I'm really not interested in living a shared life with another woman. Well, let me say, you're not ready to get married. You're not.

Of course, well, a woman could add some wonderful things to my life. No, that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about living a shared life.

And you, if you're already married, husbands, if you're there, this is the fact of the matter. This is what God calls you to, to have this mind in you, to go and live your life in sharing and companionship. And a husband must never forget that he shares his life with his wife.

And one example you could give, let's say if a man feels called to the mission field, but he doesn't consider, doesn't even think about what his wife thinks or feels. A man has no right to isolate himself over a matter like that from his wife. I mean, the two are one flesh.

God has made them together one. He has to consider his wife's view. It's a very poor Christian who says, I feel called to a particular work, and it doesn't matter what my wife says.

It does matter. You share a life together. That's how God has made it.

Not only do they share a life, Jesus shares his dignity, his great, his glorious position with his bride. Whatever honor, whatever position we have, we share it with our wives. I take a man, and he accomplishes things, and he gets compliments or awards or credits or this.

He has every reason in the world, as a Christian man in a Christian marriage, to genuinely look at his wife and say, well, she has deserved it, too. It's her honor, as well. It's not just my honor.

It's her honor. It's not just my glory. It's her glory.

It belongs to her, as well. Now, somebody might objectively, and quite objectively analyze the situation, come along and say, well, you know, she doesn't deserve that honor. She didn't do it.

He did it. How can you say she deserves the honor? She deserves the glory. Well, first of all, the answers to that are twofold.

First of all, she did contribute in ways that you can't imagine. I mean, even if she didn't have a hand in the actual work, she certainly supported and helped in many other ways, but the larger issue simply is this, is that this is given completely apart from the question of deserving. I mean, when Jesus gives us his glory, his honor, when Jesus gives us those things, do we deserve it? Is he waiting for us to deserve it? It's completely irrelevant to the issue, isn't it? And so the fact of the matter is, well, it doesn't matter if she deserves it or not.

She's your wife. She should share in the glory and the honor and whatever dignity you receive. She should share in it just because she is your wife, and you share these things together as a couple.

Jesus also shares his plans, his heart with his bride. You know, he's revealed it to in his word, hasn't he? He's told us what the future will hold. He told us about his return, about the coming glory that will come, and this is how it is in a healthy marriage relationship.

The husband tells his wife everything, and she knows every secret, every desire, every ambition, every hope, every project that ever enters his mind. She's one with him. Husbands say, well, you know, I can't live that kind of open life before my wife.

There's no way. I mean, knowing who I am, knowing who she is, it would never work. Can I say that this is what God wants to accomplish in your marriage? You look at your marriage right now, and you say, boy, this isn't there.

I don't know if it can ever be there. You say, well, listen, this is what Jesus Christ wants to accomplish in my life. He wants you and your wife to have a completely shared life where there are no secrets, where there is nothing hidden, where you can be completely open, or as I could take the terminology from the book of Genesis, naked and unashamed.

Naked in the sense there's nothing covering, nothing hidden. No, it's all out in the open, and yet you're completely unashamed because she's one with him. So he'll tell her things that he wouldn't say to anybody else, and she shares everything, and there's nothing kept back, nothing hidden.

That should be the relationship between husband and wife. Might I say as well, it should be the relationship between Jesus and his church, shouldn't it? You've been trying to hide things from your Lord, haven't you? Now, we all know how foolish it is to try to hide things from our wives, because they find out, don't they? How much more foolish is it try to hide things from our Savior? He knows it already. It's not a matter of he will find out.

He has found out. He knows it. So why do you keep that secret thing locked up in your heart? Why do you continue in that secret sin, thinking that nobody sees when all along the Lord God sees? Why don't you let the Lord shine the light of his truth and his love upon? See, that's how it should work in the marriage, and that's how it should also work in the relationship between a believer and his Lord.

You see, a wife worthy of the name, she doesn't need to be encouraged to take an interest in her husband's affairs. She counts it as her greatest privilege to help her husband. She's vitally interested in everything that he does, and she wants it to succeed.

That's how it is between the bride of Christ and Jesus, and that's how it is between a healthy relationship between husband and wife. It's not only glory, it's not only plans, it's not only all of that. You know, there's another thing that Jesus shares with his bride, and that's his problems and his sufferings.

Now, the Bible says that we have the fellowship of his sufferings. Now, that's a hard thing for us to swallow, isn't it? We'll share his glory, we'll share his exaltation, we'll share his name, we'll share all those wonderful things, but to share in his sufferings, well, I don't know about that, but that's what it is to live in the Christian life. And that's how it is in a healthy marriage as well.

A wife worthy of the name suffers when her husband suffers. She suffers in her heart when she sees him suffering. She shares it with him, she bears it with him, and so the Apostle Paul would do in his relationship with Jesus, and that's how it is with the healthy relationship between a husband and a wife as well.

Friends, Jesus Christ has a glorious destiny, a glorious future, a glorious prospect. That's how it should be in the relationship between the believer and his Lord, and the husband and the wife. We share in his future.

We recognize the glorious future that Jesus has called us to. I just want to say shame on us. You know, shame on us for our weakness, our helplessness, our complaining, our laziness, the way sometimes we half envy the world and the so-called riches or the so-called love that they have, the so-called wonderful life.

The world's passing away, it's under condemnation, but you and I have a glorious future to look forward to. Every wife, she wants to marry a husband who has a great future, right? The husband says, well, honey, you know, we're gonna get married, and you know, in a few years we're gonna be on the street, and I would have a job, and we'll be disheveled, and you know, I know a nice few soup kitchens down in town, and we can share those together, and you go on and on. Well, that doesn't sound very appetizing to the wife, does it? Believer, I've got glorious news for you.

Your husband, Jesus Christ, has a tremendous future, and you get to share in it with him. There you go. You have that glorious future with him.

You see, that's the destiny that he spoke about here in verse 27, and let's conclude with this verse, and I almost apologize. It's a very incomplete understanding that we have of this passage. We'll have to string it together over a few weeks here, but let's conclude with this thought from verse 27, where he says that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that should be holy and without blemish.

We're aware of this, aren't we, that a couple, husbands and wives, as the years go on, the spots and the blemishes increase, they don't decrease, but that's not how it is with the relationship between Jesus and his bride. As Jesus and his bride, as the believer and their Lord grow closer and closer together, the wrinkles diminish, the spots diminish. No, they're not marked by any kind of age, any kind of blemish, any imperfection, and on that day, when we stand before the Lord, on that wedding day, our preparation will be perfected, and he'll present us all to himself with all the angels, with all the potentates of heaven looking on, and they'll scrutinize us and examine us, and we, as the bride of Christ, will be checked over from head to foot, there won't be a single wrinkle, a single spot, we'll be in perfection before the Lord, and that's the glorious destiny that he calls us to.

So I don't know where to end this message. I don't know if I should end it with the exhortation to the husbands. Husbands, you have this picture in front of you, don't you? This is how you must love your wives.

This is the shared life you must live with them. I could end it there, or I could end it with, believer, this is the shared life that Jesus Christ wants to have with you, and look at the glorious destiny you have in this shared life. Well, let's leave it with that, shall we? I mean, how should you feel knowing that that's your destiny as a believer? I'll tell you how you should feel.

You meet an engaged woman before her wedding, and how does she feel? Well, first of all, she's incredibly stressed because she has to make all the arrangements with the flowers, and the photographer, and the food, and all the arrangements. But let's say we could wipe all of that away, because I assure you, Jesus is not going to bother you with the flower arrangements for your wedding day with him. That day when you're united with Jesus Christ, you don't have to worry about the photographer, the catering, he has it all arranged.

So if you were to eliminate all of that from the scene, how does that engaged woman feel? She's excited, isn't she? She's almost dreamily excited with this prospect of the wedding day, and being joined to that person that she'll share her life with forever. Isn't that how believers should have that attitude towards the Lord? Have almost a dreamy excitement about being joined together with that one that we're espoused to, being ready for that shared life that will continue on for eternity. And so here's my simple question for you to conclude with, have you lost that? Maybe at one time you had that sight of excitement, you looked forward to that time, you had this passionate expectation and desire to be united with Jesus Christ, and to live with him in that way.

Maybe at one time you had that, and you don't have it anymore. It shouldn't be that way. You know, if it's real, it's true, then you should be excited about it.

If you ran across a bride who was completely unenthused about her wedding day, well, I hear you're getting married in a month. Yeah, yeah. Well, you're excited, aren't you? Well, you know, you'd think something's wrong, wouldn't you? You'd wonder about that marriage.

You'd say something's wrong with the relationship. Friends, honestly now, if there's not an excitement in your heart that rises up when you consider your coming union with Jesus Christ, there's something wrong with the relationship there. So today's a day to get it right.

Why not set it right with him? And let's ask the Lord to do that work in our heart right now. Let's pray. Father, I pray this morning, and first of all, I pray for myself and all the husbands here.

It's so easy for us, Lord, to be essentially selfish and to live a life separate from our wives. But Lord, we want to follow the pattern of Jesus and live a shared life with our bride in everything that it means, God. Forgive us for not living up to that ideal, but Lord, press us on to fulfill it in the fullness of what it means.

Father, give us a passion for bringing this to pass. Do it as a work by your Spirit in our hearts. But Father, I pray also, not only for the husbands, but for everybody here this morning who has perhaps lost that excited expectation being united with Jesus.

Lord, maybe they never had it, maybe they had it at one time, and now it's gone. Whatever that place, I pray that you would restore it right now, even as I pray, even as they pray out to you, Lord, agreeing with my prayer, that you'd give us all that appropriate, excited expectation that coming day of union with you and when that shared life that we enjoy right now with Jesus, in part, will one day be perfected. We thank you for it, Lord, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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