

# Christ, Love, and Husbands

*A Real Look at Real Marriage*

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Verse:** Ephesians 5:25-33  
**Preached on:** Sunday, June 30, 2024

**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, this morning we go straight into our message in order to have plenty of time to honor the Lord at his Table at the end of the service, and in the never-ending, ever-wise providence of God, the natural course of our pulpit plans leads us into a text that both satisfies what we've been speaking about on marriage and also preparing our hearts for Communion. Only the Lord could generate such things without any sense of planning on our part. So I invite you to turn to Ephesians chapter 5. We're going to begin at verse 25 in just a moment as we come to the role of husbands in marriage. All of the past three or four weeks have been devoted to the topic of marriage. After I preached a message on Tuesday night titled "When Marriage Gets Difficult" was the topic and there was dozens, if not scores, of people that said, please speak on marriage more, and so we've paused everything in order to be able to do that and we come now to the role of husbands. On Tuesday, we're going to have a special Q&A. There's going to be a link sent out for you to submit questions that you might like us to address during the interview on Tuesday evening that will be of a very practical nature compared to some of the principles that we're trying to articulate from the pulpit. And so last week we addressed the role of women biblically from Ephesians 5:22 to 24, and now we come to verses 25 through the end of the chapter on the role of husbands in Christian marriage.

Now immediately I have good news for you men in the audience today, you husbands in the audience. I promise you that I am not about to rebuke you for anything that you have or haven't done. I promise you that I am not going to embarrass you in front of your wives or make the drive home difficult because of anything that I say. The spirit of it is not like that. And maybe in years past, especially maybe when I was still in California, I preached on marriage with a little bit of a different spirit, but today at least it's different. All I want to do today is to help you men think rightly about what it means to be a Christian, to be a husband, or to you know, one day to become a husband. All I'm going to do today is to help the way that you think and that is going to be very essential, and it will be far more impactful than me trying to give you a list of things that you ought to do that I think you should do for your wife, which she may or may not want.

And so let's just think today, let's just look at principles from God's word, and I want to set it up this way by way of introduction. Back 13 years ago, in September of 2011, I had a privilege the kind of which cannot be estimated to be able to experience. For a few

short days, I had direct personal custody of a first edition, first issue, 1611 King James Version Bible. Thing must have weighed 40 pounds, at least it seemed like it. It was a massive thing. It was a gift for someone else. And it was my high privilege and high honor for those few days to protect what has been called the most influential book in the history of English civilization. And, you know, there's a lot of KJV-only pastors out there that I bet have never held one of those things like I have. Great men produced that Bible. Great men over the years for that single copy of it had held it and passed it down from generation to generation. You could see that at one time it was possessed by a pastor or a church that was emphasizing New Testament preaching because the pages there were worn and it was obvious it had been handled greatly in the New Testament era, and, you know, somewhere along the line, a pastor better than me had that Bible and was preaching from it, pointing his people to Christ from it and all of that. And it was my privilege to hold that Bible and to protect it for just a few short days before I delivered it to the next step in the chain of custody. Nothing bad, nothing bad was going to happen to that book, that Bible on my watch, and it was very, very special to me. It almost makes me emotional thinking about the privilege of that even today.

Now, that special book and that special sense of protection gives you a little bit of a picture of the way that Christian men should think about their wives and how they respond to them because, men, the way a man views his wife will inevitably determine his response to her. The right value or whatever value he places on her is going to have a driving force in the nature of his relationship to her and what I want to do, I just want to break this message down into two parts. The first part of this message will be a little bit of review over what we've looked at over the prior two or three weeks, and bring it all into bear here, and the second part will come more directly from the text in Ephesians chapter 5. Now men, listen, the way you value women in general is going to largely be determinative of the way that you value your wife and the way that you treat her, and secondly, the way that you value Christ is also going to directly determine the way that you value and relate to your wife. The way that you value women, what you think about God's gift of women generally is going to carry over into the way that you respond to your wife, and the way that you think about Christ is going to inevitably carry over into the way that you treat and value your wife. What you think about redeeming love is going to determine the way you think about marital love. The way that you think about atoning blood from Christ for the sake of your soul is going to determine the attitude that you have toward marriage.

And one of the things that I said in one of these prior messages, I can't tell you how much I wish I had heard these things 30 years ago or 35 years ago. They would have made me a better husband, let's just leave it at that, than what I have been, and I want to purge you of a lot of marriage sermons you've heard in other places. The answer to your marriage is not buying flowers or buying chocolate or going on a romantic date or anything like that, or setting up a regular time to court your wife. You can do that stuff if you want to, but it's all outward ornamentation that doesn't change anything if you're not thinking rightly about women and about Christ before you even get to the woman that you actually have or that one day you actually will have. And so we need to think rightly about broad principles, and then the broad principles will inform the right way for you to go forward.

So let me just start with the way that you value women, point number one here, the way you value women, and it is essential for men to have a right biblical view of women in general as they consider the role that husbands have in marriage. So we start with the high dignity that Scripture gives to women. We've already covered all of this, but I did not want to go into the text and just assume that, assume what you've heard maybe, maybe you haven't even heard it. I don't want to assume anything because this is fundamental. If you are mindful of this about women in general and understand, as I've said many times, that wives come from the realm of women, then the way that you view women will carry over to your wife, and the whole idea here is that we need to help men not simply view their wives as someone who performs functions in different rooms of the house, including the kitchen, and just exists to make you happy and to fulfill what you want and you get angry and out of sorts when she doesn't, and boss her around because you know something about, you take one verse out of context, that wives are supposed to submit to their husband. I'm not being rebuking here or anything like that. I just want to set the context that we earnestly need to deal with this rightly, because this is a central part of the word of God.

And so we start with the high dignity Scripture gives to women, and the question is, you know, how do you value women? What do you think gives women their worth, and what is it that make women special, and how that affects the way that you relate to them? We've seen multiple times in these past few weeks that women share in the image of God. Christian women share fully in the pardon of sin and eternal life and in union with Christ. Women are fully equal to men in the image of God that they bear. They're fully equal in the value and the union that we have in Christ. They're full participants in the forgiveness of sin, the imputation of righteousness, the promise of eternal life in heaven. Women share in all of that fully and equally and so, for a Christian man, there is absolutely no room whatsoever to have a condescending or undignified view of women to begin with. Now, you go on, you know, and you read in the gospels with an eye toward the way that Jesus Christ related to women, what do you see? You see that he freely taught women. He freely honored women. He freely healed women. He freely forgave women. It was to a woman in John 4 that he made himself known as the Messiah. And this is all contrary to the culture of the time where women were not viewed as equals with men.

And so Christ himself, men, if you say that you love Christ and that you belong to him and that he's your Lord and Savior and example and all of that, well, that immediately informs the way that you view all women. It does away with any secret sins that you might want to have to pursue your lusts and things like that. You can't view women in the same way anymore once you see that much. Then, for us men, another way, another thing that we need to see is the way that women responded to Christ during his earthly ministry, and what we saw in that was that women were more faithful to Christ than the men were. The women supported his ministry. The women followed him. The disciples of Christ fled when the heat was on during his trial. The women followed him to the cross. The women followed him to the grave. The women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. God gave Christ to us through a woman. And so all of this comes together,

and we start to see that the realm of women—women who God created a woman to be a helpmate and a companion to Adam—God has bestowed such high dignity on women through the image of God, the gift of salvation, the way that Christ ministered to them during his earthly life, I venture to say that there needs to be a lot of cleansing and changing of thinking taking place in the minds of many men in light of this, even men who hold to the Bible as their standard in terms of the practical way that we actually think and relate and what forms the fundamental principles by which we respond to women. Not all men have that problem. Not all men have stumbled in this way. I know, you know, and I'm grateful for men within our congregation that honor their wives as they do, but generally speaking, I think that this is where a lot of the weakness in Christian marriage has come in and when you realize that, again, broadly speaking, that divorce is practically as common in the so-called Christian church as it is in society at large, it's obvious that there needs to be a complete revolution of thought in the Christian church without any regard to what's happening outside of the walls of the Christian church.

Let's say another word or two about women and think rightly about godly women as we saw them in the four gospels. What did we see? We saw women displaying a humble faith in the promise of God, an admirable, exemplary, humble faith in the promise of God. They displayed a teachable spirit under the word of God. You think of Mary at the feet of Jesus; she just wanted to be there and hear what Christ had to say. And the preoccupation with the events of the gospel were things that manifested and were exemplary, and all of that to say that, and for this, you know, to encourage ladies also in terms of what they think, when we observe a humble spirit before the promises of God, a teachable spirit under the word of God, attention to the things of the gospel, the gospel of Christ, ladies, you know, just by way of reminder, this is a completely different realm of thought and existence and life than what is shoveled down your throats from the world around you and that you can't help but be influenced by if even embracing. You know, the whole competitive spirit, nature of life, and trying to be like a man, and needing to follow after and do what men do and all of that, so completely different, that is so contrary to the godly spirit of that humble spirit, that teachable spirit, that preoccupation with the gospel, you know, and to have a for a woman to pursue Christ and to love Christ and be born of Christ and led by the Spirit, it's going to lead her into things like that and not trying to prove what a man she could be if only she had been born differently, I guess.

And so all of that was very important because we see the high dignity of women and that Scripture teaches this and so when we come to Ephesians 5:22 to 24, and we see, "Wives, submit to your husbands," it's impossible to view that as something that takes away from the dignity of women in regard to the whole context of the way that Scripture teaches them. This is about a matter of a role that God has assigned. God gives responsibilities to different people in different ways, but it's not at the expense of the inherent dignity that a woman has. It's simply a different role that is given to her that she is to honor but, as we said, submission is, biblical submission rightly understood, is a place of high dignity because it is Christ who calls you to it, the Christ who made you in the image of God, the Christ who makes you a full heir of eternal salvation, the Christ who loved and ministered to women in life. You know, whatever position or lot the Lord assigns to us in

life is by definition dignified because he is the one who orders all of our circumstances, including our roles in marriage.

And so, with all of that, men, we come to the question, we call the question, as it were, to the table. Men, how do you respond and how do you value the high dignity of women? How do you value the high dignity of women? Is that an influential formative force in your personal character that as you think about women, as you see women in this room, as you contemplate your wife or your daughters or women that you encounter in the course of daily life, how do you view them? I'm afraid I know, and I therefore call you to have your mind transformed by Scripture, have your mind renewed by the Holy Spirit in terms of the things that we have seen, and have a completely different view of the way that you think about women around you. Women are to be on the receiving end of your respect, your honor, your chivalry, if we can put it in terms of that old-fashioned term, and this is completely counter-cultural. I know that. And I know that most women don't portray themselves in consistency with the high dignity that God has given to them but, men, that doesn't affect you. You let your mind be determined by what Scripture says, by what Christ exemplified, and you view women with a sense of dignity, and then you carry that right over to your wife in an even more elevated way, and you start to see the effect that this has on everything. It's really, really remarkable.

And again, I have to repeat this, perhaps because I'm just mindful of being sanctified in my own thinking and seeing how far short I've fallen in my own life over 35 years of marriage, that the woman that God has given to you, the wife that God has given to you, is more than your cook and your housekeeper and your mate and the mother of your children. She's so, so much more than that and you have to view her, you should never think about another woman, especially your wife, you should never think about another woman, and especially about your wife, apart from Jesus Christ. You should see Christ side-by-side with her, the one who saved her, the one who made her, the one who gave her to you, the one who bestows and confers such dignity upon her, that it is ever-increasing a matter of motivation to you that the dignity that I bestow on my wife needs to be somehow commensurate with the dignity that Christ himself has given to her. And the great likelihood is that for many, if not most of you, that will elevate your view of your wife in a way that perhaps has passed your understanding before. So the way you value Christ. Men, how do you value the high dignity of women, and how does that carry over into the way that you consider women in your own mind and in your own heart? If we get these principles established in the heart, everything else will take care of itself. I don't need to give you a bunch of illustrations today because we're concerned about the principles.

Now, secondly, let's go and consider the way that you value Christ, men. The way that you value Christ, and ultimately, the way that a man develops in his consideration of his wife is going to be reflective of the way that he evaluates and considers Christ. There's no denying that. It's right on the surface of the text that we have before us here, Ephesians 5, verses 25 to 33. Let me read that text to get it in our minds. It will prepare our hearts not only for consideration of the role of husbands, but as we approach the Table here for all of us. So in Ephesians 5, verse 25,

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

I want to make a couple of general observations here in the text before we move on to it. Notice the direct comparison that Paul makes three times in the passage about comparing marriage to the relationship of Christ and the church. He had already done it, he had already done it in verses 23 and 24, said, the husband's the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church. Verse 24, as the church submits to Christ, wives should submit in everything to their husband. You add those two, and it's five different times that marriage is wrapped tightly around the nature of Christ and the church. You see it in verse 25, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. You see it there in verse 29, you nourish and cherish your wife just as Christ does the church. Verse 32, this mystery is profound, I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. And so you see this heavenly eternal picture that is to frame the entire way that we view marriage, not about the day-to-day things that preoccupy us, but we're to start there. And I know that for many of you, this passage is familiar, and yeah, it's familiar to me too, but the Spirit of God can certainly give us a fresh understanding, fresh insight, fresh motivation. This is the eternal living word of God, and it's living today. The fact that you've heard messages on this text in the past doesn't mean that you don't have anything new to learn today, does it?

Notice also that love is the controlling thought in this passage, specifically as it applies husbands to their wives. Look at verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." Verse 28, "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies." And in verse 33, "let each one of you love his wife as himself." And so love, love, love, Christ in the church, five times, Christ in the church, going back to the role of the wife. And so men, and all of us, I guess, but we cannot be claiming to be disciples of Christ, and, you know, boast in our, you know, whatever, and think about marriage in any less of a way, and that means to think about our wives in any less of a way.

Now, I understand, let me just say this, and, you know, as a mild word to the ladies as well, I understand that your wife, in herself, is not worthy of all of the lofty things that are spoken of here. In herself, she's not worthy of that but understand, men, and this is why right Christian thinking is so essential, you, in an infinitely greater way, are not

worthy of the love that Christ has shown upon you. You're not worthy of redeeming love. You're not worthy of atoning blood from the cross now are you? And so the matter of personal worth, if it was a matter of personal worth, we would all be outside of Christ. We would have no hope apart from his self-motivated redeeming love and his atoning blood which he gave us. And if he is the pattern and you are unworthy of him, then the fact that your wife may fall short, may have flaws and sins and besetting sins of her own and irritate you from time to time or even often, has nothing to do with the way that you think and the way that you respond in marriage. It has absolutely nothing to do with that. You draw your instruction, your cues, your thinking, your motivation from Christ himself. And so everything, men, about your role in marriage, everything flows from the way that you value Christ and what you understand about Christ. Everything flows from that. You think vertically before you think horizontally about your wife because the way that you value Christ will determine your response to his word in general, and it will determine the way that you respond to this text in particular, which means it'll determine the way that you respond to your wife.

Now, let's think about Christ, shall we? Let's think about Christ in light of this passage and in light of the privilege that we have coming up so soon to remember him in the ordinance that he appointed, and this really does change the way that you talk about, even the way that you talk about marriage, the way that you preach about marriage, when you view it through the lens of Christ rather than, you know, trying to come up with commands about what men should or shouldn't do. Let's think about his sacrificial love for a moment, shall we? This is a subpoint, the way you value Christ, and then I'm going to give you three sub-points here, and all of you ladies can benefit from these things as well, whether you are a widow, you're single, you're married, all of these things benefit you as well because they help you reflect on how you're going to respond to Christ himself in your own heart. So let's think about his sacrificial love. The way you value Christ and subpoint A, his sacrificial love, because Paul uses the love of Christ to illustrate how husbands are to love their wives.

Look at verse 25 with me again. "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." It's right there in the text. He loved the church, meaning that he sought the best interests of the church. It's not that Christ had a sentimental affection for the church, a passing emotion that made him kind of weepy or anything like that. Not the love of the world, not the love of media or anything like that, Christ looked on his people, as it were, from all of eternity and said, "I will secure their well-being. I will secure their benefit because they can't secure the benefit on their own." And so Christ, in love, in obedience to the Father, set himself on a course whereby he would come to earth, live a perfect life, go to the cross, and offer atoning blood for the sake of redeeming love, in order to rescue his people from the bondage to sin and to Satan in which they were in, to deliver them from spiritual death, from the kingdom of Satan, and deliver them over to the kingdom of Christ, deliver them over to new life, deliver them over to forgiveness and righteousness and justification and sanctification and one day glorification, all out of redeeming love, all decided and determined to be accomplished before you or I were even born. And so when we consider the love of Christ, we see, first of all, that it's very exceedingly transcendent, and we also see just how sacrificial it is.

Look at there again at the end of verse 25, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her," and if we just focused on the, you know, we could talk about the incarnation, he came from heaven to earth in order to be born as a man, but let's just focus on those final events of his life and of his crucifixion as he stood unjustly accused before six different trials and the soldiers mocked him, and spat upon him, and plucked his beard, and thrust a painful crown into his head, and then forced him to carry his cross to Calvary. And then he hung on the cross and bore the weight of our sins as light was extinguished, as the wrath of God was poured down upon him. And in the process of that, he had taken care of his mother and he had forgiven a thief by his side who cried out to him for forgiveness and prayed that God would forgive those who were crucifying him. And the other matters of the seven sayings on the cross, "I thirst. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Now look, beloved, when Christ died, the earth shook. There was a great earthquake, I believe it's Matthew 27 tells us. And as we contemplate these things in our hearts today, there's not going to be a literal earthquake as I speak but there should be an earthquake and a shaking in your heart as once again you are brought face-to-face with the evidence of redeeming love. This wasn't Christ simply saying, "I love you," and then going away. This is Christ saying, "I love you with a redeeming love," and for 30-some years, he lived his life with his face set toward Jerusalem, knowing that that would be the outcome, that he would lay himself down on our behalf, he would give himself for us in the most profound way that the mind of God even could fathom. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her in complete painful self-denial, self-sacrifice for people who had rejected and hated him, rebels just like you and me. That's who he did it for. He laid down his life so that we might be redeemed. Think of that. That holy, innocent life, the eternal Son of God gave himself up for such a wretch as you and me.

That is sacrificial love. That is love in the language and the spirit of Philippians 2 that does not insist on what it deserves, but rather gives up what it has for the sake of the one that it loves. In fact, let's turn to Philippians 2 for just a moment so I can remind you of that. Philippians 2, just a couple of pages over in your Bible, Ephesians and then Philippians. Paul writes this to the church generally about life in the church, but it is certainly the mind that would mark a godly husband as well when we contemplate these things, Ephesians 2, verse 5, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." The holy, innocent, undefiled Son of God, humbling himself, not demanding what was his own, but became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. That's how he gave himself for us. That is sacrificial love to the nth degree.

And so this kind of love obeys God, it obeys the Father, and this kind of love serves to the point of sacrifice the one that it loves. That in very much shorthand condensed reference is what Paul is saying here when he says, "Husbands, you love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." He's assuming that you'll take a few minutes to contemplate what Christ has done for the church and thereby what he has done

for you as we're doing here this morning, that that would sink in on your heart and soften it, and mold it, and direct its affections so that you have a similar mind toward your wife that Christ had toward the church. In the broadest of terms, the Christian husband, the godly man, has and seeks out the spiritual needs of his wife, the physical needs of his wife, the relational needs of his wife, because he has a spirit of sacrifice animating him that he learned from Christ himself.

Now secondly, and so I ask you, before we go to the second subpoint here, so I ask you, men, what value do you attach to the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ because the value that you attach to that is going to inform the way that you respond to your wife. This is not difficult. This is not a discussion of infralapsarianism versus supralapsarianism. This is not abstract theology. We're simply addressing the fundamental, most basic thing that should motivate you as a Christian is what assessment do you make of the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. Start there and then the matter of the way that you respond to your wife, everything about it is informed by that.

Now secondly, how do you value his sanctifying love? His sanctifying love. You know, Christ and I, hopefully if you've been at our church any length of time, you don't diminish salvation to simply the fact that God saved me from hell. You know, that's just such a crass, incomplete view of salvation. God saved you in order to make you his own. God saved you so that you would belong to him, that you would be in his family, and that, as it says in Titus chapter 2, that he would purify a people for himself who would glorify him, and we see this reflected in, as we consider the value that you place on the sanctifying love of Christ, because the goal of Christ was to purify a people for himself. Look at verse 26. We've just seen Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, sacrificial love, and it was a sacrificial love that was also a sanctifying love, verse 26. "Christ loved the church, gave himself up for her that," unto this purpose, in other words, "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." To sanctify is to set apart. That's the meaning of that term, to set something apart for, and in this context, for a condition of moral purity.

Now, men, listen to me. Listen to the word of God here. Christ did not love you because you were pure or because you had made yourself pure for him. That is not the case. Christ's love was not a response to your purity at all. It was not a response to your self-effort. His love came from his own nature, from his own character. He loved you when you were not pure. He loved you when you were not pleasing in his sight. He did not love you because you are pure, he loved you in order to make you pure by the operation of his word and his Spirit upon your heart. And so Christ loved you to sanctify you and to make you holy, not because you were holy. Salvation is by grace, by redeeming love, not by works and merit on the part of the one who is saved, and what Paul says here is, is that husbands, that sanctifying love is a picture of the way that you love your wife, you know, to seek out her holiness, to foster an environment in your marriage and in your home and in your family, however you do that, that promotes spiritual growth, that your wife should be, as a result of being married to you, a better Christian than she was beforehand.

That should be the enduring nature of it, that there should be a greater security in Christ that she has, a greater settledness in it.

So you don't expose your wife to defilement. You don't speak to her in defiling terms. You don't expose her to defiling entertainment. You couldn't. You couldn't. You couldn't if you had any respect for the high dignity that God's given to her. You couldn't if you loved her with a sanctifying love. And notice this, men, since Christ did not wait for you to get better before he loved you, he loved you when you weren't better, then in like manner, you love your wife when she doesn't deserve it, when she's exasperated you, when she's annoyed you again. You draw upon that deep well of the love of Christ and you pour that love out on her and, you know, we're talking in relational terms here, but even in physical terms, you know. Your wife's going to get older. She's not going to have the same figure she had when you got married. Her hair is going to change color along the way and other things. Just remember, you know, that you're not exactly the same Prince Charming that you were on the day of your wedding either. And so the point of sanctifying love is it transcends all of that in response to Christ. He loved me to make me pure, he loved me to sanctify me, and that's the spirit I carry over into my marriage, and the goal is simply to develop a natural reflex, a natural care to her, for her, and for her needs.

Look at verses 28 through 30. "In the same way husbands should love their 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 Christ does the church, because we are members of his body." We are members of his body. And so, you know, it's probably good to ask yourself where do you lead your wife? Do you lead her into the teaching of the word of God somehow? Do you lead her into faithful participation in the body of Christ or something else? She's going to be sanctified under the word and in response to the people of God. You have to weigh out where sanctifying love plays out in the life priorities that you establish for your family, men. And so you seek to develop her spiritual maturity. You help her use her giftedness. And the whole spirit of this passage is it's an atmosphere of tender love and tender care. It's not demanding, "Woman, you submit to me!" I'm really getting kind of sick of some of the things I see coming out of other kinds of ministries and the way that they speak about women and treat women and all of that. Listen, listen: the love, the redeeming love of Christ upon his people is a tender, sacrificial love that sets them apart to draw them even more into the knowledge and direct experience of his redeeming grace so that there is a sense of confidence and assurance and security of resting in the love of my Beloved, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, that I am secure, I am safe in his hand, and no one can pluck me therefrom. And we men, I say "we men," not "you men," we men, we can be so selfish, so rough, so cold. Shame on us.

So what do you do? Give to her. Talk with her. Be patient with her. Help her. And here's one of the best changes that I've made in the way that I preach on these things, what I'm about to say right now. Far more effective. I used to try to give illustrations of what a man should do or what a woman should do to show she loves her husband, what a man should do to... Listen, let me make this really, really simple and put you in a position to

succeed that has nothing to do with a suggestion from me. Don't ask me to illustrate for you how to love your wife. Don't look to me to do that. Ask her, "What would make your life better? How can I help you today?" Ask her and let her tell you and then do it with a cheerful, grateful, loving heart. This is what love does. Don't try to buy her off with, you know, with cheap flowers from Costco because you responded in a bad way. Let her tell you what she wants, what she needs, and then respond to her that way and say, "Of course, dear." You sanctify her. You set her apart.

Thirdly, in Christ we see a separate love, you could say. His separate love. And let me just approach it this way. Christ makes a distinction and a separation between his people and everybody else. That's easy enough to see just by knowing what's going to happen at the final judgment when Christ separates the sheep from the goats. There is a love of God, a general grace of God that falls upon all men, but for his people, there is a unique, separate love that goes beyond that to make them his own that Christ gives to his people, that he's given to us, that is distinct and we have a love from Christ that not everybody else has. Those who hate him and reject him are not the recipients of the same kind of love that we as his people have. He separates us. He loves us in a unique way with redeeming love purchased by atoning blood.

Well, in like manner, men, in marriage there is a new structure that is in place. Look at verses 31 and following. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." You know that he's quoting from Genesis 2 there. To cleave, to become one flesh, to hold fast, it's the idea of like being glued together. We are joined together in a way that does not belong to anyone else. It includes the union of intimacy, but it goes far beyond that, it's a relational exclusivity so that there is a sense in a human way that your wife has the claim to your highest, most exclusive affection in a way that goes beyond your parents, beyond your children, beyond the buddies you hang out with, so that if someone tries to drive a wedge between you and your wife, you immediately, actively, forcibly repudiate that and refuse the intrusion. An adulterous woman comes along through your computer screen or through some other means, say, "Uh-uh, I cleave to my wife, I hold fast to her." A flirtatious woman comes along, tries to woo you and to make friends with you and all of that, you say, "No, no," not simply in a physical sense, but in an emotional, relational sense, "there is an exclusivity that belongs to my wife that I do not give to anyone else."

And I don't mind reusing an illustration from the very earliest days of Truth Community Church, before we were church. I had to, in honor of this principle, and I wanted to do it, one of the things that...I don't know that there's anyone in the room that was affected by this, and I'm not speaking about anyone in particular, but one of the things that I had to establish as a new pastor coming into a new situation is that some of the women in the church found out that I do not hug them. They tried to hug me. I wasn't having anything to do with it and there were sometimes, one occasion in particular that was very, very awkward when a woman approached me and she got an outstretched hand. Don't do that. Well, part of the reason that you do that, part of the reason that you do that is to honor this separate love principle. You know, I don't go around hugging women. Maybe at a funeral, maybe in a severe emotional crisis, I'll put my arm around someone to comfort

them, but as a routine matter, no way. No way. And if women think, come to our church and think I'm cold because of that, I can live with that. I can live with that because there is a separate love that belongs to my wife and my wife alone. And besides that, I mean, I know there are huggy pastors, and that's their problem, but the last thing that I wanted, and I mean, that doesn't even appeal to me, number one, but also I did not want a husband to be able to come to me and say, "Why are you hugging my wife?" There is no good answer to that question. "Well, I'm just being friendly." No, no, no. You keep boundaries in order to honor this principle of marriage, to honor your own integrity in ministry, to make it clear that you're wasting your time to try to puncture that. And so, that's just a practical illustration of the way it works out for someone in ministry. It's not a regular part of what you do.

Now, all of that in response to Christ because Christ has loved us with redeeming love purchased with atoning blood. Christ has loved us with a sacrificial love. He has loved us with a sanctifying love. He has loved us with a separate love. And what Scripture says is you go to Christ for your salvation, you go to him for redemption, you go to him in repentance and faith and have him save your soul, and then if he has given you marriage or if he gives you marriage in the future, you borrow from him to say, this is how I live within the institution of marriage that God created, and that somehow this woman that you have given to me, no longer saying that in the spirit of Adam in a state of accusation against God in the garden, "Why did you do that, Adam?" "Well, this woman that you gave to me misled me." No, instead, in humble, faith and love and submission to Christ himself, you go to Christ and you say, "Oh, this woman you gave me, she's a woman of high dignity. She's a woman who should be the object of my love because I value her and I value you, O Christ. I value your sacrificial love, your sanctifying love, your separate love, and Lord, I want to manifest that in the closest relationship that you've given to me for you, first of all, O Christ, and then for her, the woman that you have given to me."

And so there's a mysterious joining of themes together here in this text and in this message that Paul himself has to clarify in verses 32 and 33. As I've been speaking to you here this morning, men, I've been talking to you about Christ, and yet I've been talking to you about your wife as well. Paul says this mystery is profound. I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. The way that you think about Christ and his sanctifying, sacrificial, separate love determines the way that you think about all of these things, and so we're really discussing Christ and honoring him at the Table, and yet when you see it, you realize this all pours over into marriage as well so that the two subjects almost become inseparable. So we see the closing command there in verse 33, "let each of you love his wife as himself and let the wife see to it that she respects her husband." He breaks off the comparison to summarize all that he says.

So men, with your marriage, it comes down to this: do you value women with high dignity? Do you value Christ with all of your heart? If you do, then those fundamental principles filter through into everything else, and you can interpret each situation, each conversation, each difficulty through the lens of sacrificial love, sanctifying love, separate love. Perhaps you're feeling like I am, saying with me, "Who is adequate for these things?" None of us are. We need the Spirit to help us. We need Christ to help us.

And in this remembrance of his body and blood, we see that Christ has already taken the initiative to provide that which we lack.

Let's pray together as we prepare our hearts for Communion and as the men come forward to prepare to service. As you bow your heads, our Lord Jesus paid a complete full redemption price so that you could go free and that's what we remember at this Table this morning. This is for the Lord's people. It's the Lord's Table. It's his supper for his people. If you're walking with Christ, we lovingly invite you to this Table. If you're not a Christian, if you're living in unrepentant sin, if you're a man, a husband, and you say, "This has shattered my world and I realize how far short, I need some time here," maybe it's okay to let the elements pass this one time. But if you're yielded to Christ and receptive to him and you are a child of God through faith in Christ, we welcome all of you to take of the elements. Otherwise, let them pass.

*Father, thank you for the love of Christ, sacrificial, sanctifying, separate love. Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God, and we are. We remember that today, and Lord Jesus, we place you at the pinnacle of our deepest affections in this hour, in this moment. We thank you for your redeeming love. We thank you for your atoning blood, without which we would have no hope, but with which we're the heir of all things, including heaven itself. So as we approach the Table, we do so with gratitude, with expectation, with submission and humility before you. We love you, Lord, but we boast not in that, because we love you only because you first loved us. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at [thetruthpulpit.com](http://thetruthpulpit.com) teaching God's people God's word. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.