

A Godly Family, Part 4: Gospel-Driven Love (Eph 5:28-30)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on August 26, 2012

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A few weeks ago we began a mini-series on the family in this passage which is the longest passage addressing families in the New Testament, and its most concentrated teaching.

Part 1 – A Godly Family has Christ-centered submission/headship (v. 22-25)

Part 2 – A Godly Family loves the Church like Christ (v. 25)

Part 3 – A Godly Family is being transformed by grace (v. 25-27)

Part 4 – A Godly Family is driven by the gospel (v. 28-31)

Christ-centered, church-loving, grace-transforming, gospel-driven. Those phrases sum up the book of Ephesians applied to the family. Ephesians is “the *Gospel-Driven Life*.” Paul doesn’t have a 40-day purpose or program for us, but Paul commends us to God’s word of grace in the gospel that can every day strengthen us, sanctifying, cleansing us by its daily washing just as we do for our own bodies (prior use of “the Word” in Ephesians is “the gospel” in Eph 1:13)

²⁸ *So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;* ²⁹ *for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,* ³⁰ *because we are members of His body.*

This is the gospel truth of the church’s union with Christ, as members of His body, v. 31-32. Christ cherishes the church, and calls men to cherish their wives, in 3 aspects of Christlike love:

- 1. A Practical Love (v. 28 – practical needs of our body)**
- 2. A Preeminent Love (v. 29 – “cherishes”)**
- 3. A Providing Love (v. 29-30 – “nourishes”)**

Dave Harvey has written a good book on gospel-driven love in marriage entitled *When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage*. He introduces the subject this way: ‘Everything in Scripture is either preparation *for* the gospel, presentation *of* the gospel [Eph 1-3], or participation *in* the gospel [Eph 4-6] ... Never make the mistake of thinking that the gospel is only good for evangelism and conversion. *By* the gospel we understand that, although saved, we remain sinners. *Through* the gospel we receive power to resist sin. Accurately understanding and continually applying the gospel *is* the Christian life. This also means that the gospel is an endless fountain of God’s grace in your marriage ... to look forward to a lifelong, thriving marriage , you must have a clear understanding of the gospel. Without it, you *cannot* see God, yourself, or your marriage for what they truly are. The gospel is the fountain of a thriving marriage.’¹

From the gospel flows the water of the Word to wash Christ’s bride, v. 26. We need to keep coming to the sin-cleansing gospel fountain (1 Jn 1:9). ‘There is a fountain,’ Cowper’s old gospel hymn says, where ‘sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.’

The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in His day;
And there may I, though vile as he, Wash all my sins away;
Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood Shall never lose its pow’r
Till all the ransomed church of God Be saved to sin no more;
E’er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die²

Redeeming love needs to be our theme till we die, the gospel of Christ's precious blood that never loses its power. As sinners when we 'I Do,' we instantly double the depravity under one roof. So we doubly need grace as married sinners to plunge ourselves in the gospel that washes all our sins away. When our sin is bitter to us, Christ is sweet to us³ as we drink of His grace.

The gospel is the power for the ransomed church of God in v. 25, the church Christ loved and gave Himself up for. The gospel drives the love He calls us to in v. 28-30. One author explains the Word in v. 26 that washes is believed to be 'the gospel message of God's grace...drawing us *away* from our...sin and *toward* a life of treasuring Christ and living for Him instead. Christ persistently and progressively demonstrates His love for us as His Holy Spirit takes the gospel message [1:13 calls it *the word of truth, the gospel, the truth that 1 Pet 1:22 says purifies*] and scrubs our lives, washing away whatever sins keep us from full-hearted devotion ...'⁴

James Boice writes "in one of the Greek histories that the wife of one of the generals of Cyrus, the ruler of Persia, was accused of treachery and was condemned to die. At first her husband did not know what was taking place. But as soon as he heard about it he rushed to the palace and burst into the throne room. He threw himself on the floor before the king and cried out, 'Oh, my Lord Cyrus, take my life instead of hers. Let me die in her place.'

Cyrus, who by all historical accounts was a noble and extremely sensitive man, was touched by this offer. He said, 'Love like that must not be spoiled by death.' Then he gave the husband and wife back to each other and let the wife go free.

As they walked away happily the husband said to his wife, 'Did you notice how kindly the king looked at us when he gave you the pardon?'

The wife replied, 'I had no eyes for the king. I saw only the man who was willing to die in my place.'

[Boice:] That is the picture the Holy Spirit paints for us in this great chapter of Ephesians. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, giving himself up for her. In fairness, let me say this to husbands. Most of us will never have a chance to put love to that great and ultimate test, but we do have countless lesser ways to show our love daily. One wife...told her husband, 'I know that you are willing to die for me...but while you are waiting to die, can you fill in some of the time helping me dry the dishes?'"⁵

That's what today's first point highlights: **A Practical Love (v. 28)**

In v. 28 God calls husbands to love their wives *as their own bodies* driven by the gospel truth of Christ's love for his body/bride(v. 32)

- In context, this is based on the truth of v. 23, that a husband is head of his wife, she is his body, they're one flesh (v. 31). I think that's why the end of v. 28 says "*he who loves his wife loves himself.*" We're not two people, we became one, and need to remember that.
- So as a husband I'm not just to love my wife *as I love my own body*, I'm to love my wife *as my own body*, in other words, ***as part of my own body because she is part of me***, in the same way that a head and a body are *one flesh*
- It's not like we're just 2 unconnected people and I need to think about Jaime *as much as I think about myself*. I need to think about Jaime *as myself*, as an inseparable part of me because we are joined together in inseparable union (v. 31) and because in the gospel Christ is inseparable with us (32)

- What does a head do for the body? Whatever it practically needs, as 2nd nature, because we know *it's part of our body*
- When our head discerns part of our body needs something we take care of (if our tongue or lips are parched, we drink water; if our stomach is empty, we fill it; if our head aches, we take something to alleviate the pain; if our feet are cold, we cover them; if our back itches, we scratch it; and so on)
- This is what God calls a husband to do for his wife who he is one flesh with, as part of his body. If the man as the head discerns a need in the wife he is connected to, he should as naturally and readily respond to her as his physical body
- I have to confess this is incredibly convicting, but I can't shrink back from declaring God's counsel because I fall short. This is the standard I and we need to rise to by grace.

And it's a standard many of us men in some ways were maybe beginning to come closer to before we were married to our wives, when we first dated or courted them. We did thoughtful things for our wives when first in love, often thought of them, did practical things for them, gave great attention to them and what they said and what pleased them. Maybe in a restaurant, you wanted to be so close to her, you were practically sitting in the same seat. You were always together, like glue, inseparably joined, it seemed. But then when we're joined together as man and wife, many men presume it's 'mission accomplished,' and that practical love decreases.

Jim Newheiser shares an illustration of this in a humorous letter:

'Dear Technical Support [a fictitious woman writes],
Last year I upgraded from Boyfriend 5.0 to Husband 1.0 and noticed a slowdown in the overall performance, particularly in the flower and jewelry applications that had operated flawlessly under Boyfriend 5.0. In addition, Husband 1.0 un-installed many other valuable programs, such as Romance 9.5 and Personal Attention 6.5, but installed undesirable programs such as NFL 5.0 and NBA 3.0. And now Conversation 8.0 no longer runs and House Cleaning 2.6 simply crashes the system. I've tried running Nagging 5.3 [with control-key] to fix these problems, but to no avail. What can I do? Signed, Desperate

Dear Desperate:

First keep in mind, Boyfriend 5.0 is an entertainment package, while Husband 1.0 is an operating system. At the command line, try entering C:\MTHOUGHTYOULOVEDME and download Tears 6.2 to install Guilt 3.0. If all works as designed, Husband 1.0 should then automatically run app...Flowers 3.5. But, remember, overuse can cause Husband 1.0 to default to GrumpySilence 2.5 ... Whatever you do, DO NOT install Mother-in-Law 1.0 ... not supported applications ... will crash Husband 1.0. In summary, Husband 1.0 is a great program, but it does have a limited memory and cannot learn new applications quickly. You might consider additional software to improve memory and performance. I personally recommend ... Food 3.0 and [Intimacy] 9.9.

Regards, Tech Support'⁶

I get the idea that long before computers existed for an analogy, it has been a problem for husbands to decrease performing practical love for their wives, as Paul wrote this in the 1st century. Often, the practical or thoughtful things men did before become less, because now we're already joined in marriage; but this very passage tells us now we should love her like our body because she now *is our body*

We're not thinking biblically about this – I include me in that 'we.' If we really believe v. 23, that our wife is our body and we are her head, if we really believe v. 31 that marriage joins man and woman as one flesh, we should do far more in practical love for our wives as our bodies *after we're married*, because now they're part of us! If you have a new body part (hip, knee replacement) you will care for, and do practical things for what has been joined to you (v. 28).

And more importantly, v. 32 says marriage is a picture of Christ's love for His church, which doesn't decrease after marriage. God supplies all our needs according to His glory in Christ (Phil. 4:19), everything practically we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Because Christ is joined in union with us He loves us as His body.

Wayne Mack lists practical ways a man can express love:

1. Telling her you love her frequently.
4. Smiling and being cheerful when you come home from work.
6. Taking care of the children ... so that she has free time to do what she wants.
7. Taking her out for dinner or to do some fun thing ...
8. Doing the "fix-it" jobs she wants done around the house.
12. Being willing to talk to her about her concerns and not belittling her for [them]
18. Writing love notes or letters to her.
19. Letting her know you appreciate her and what you appreciate about her ...
36. Asking forgiveness often and saying, "I was wrong and will try to change" [and being ready to catch her when she falls out of her chair if she's not used to that]
37. Actually changing where and when you should.
38. Sharing your insights, reading, good experiences with her.
42. Being reasonably happy to go shopping with her.
61. Giving her your undivided attention when she wants to talk.
63. Getting up in the middle of the night to take care of the children...⁷

Not just a Practical Love (v. 28), but 2ndly: **A Preeminent Love**

²⁹ *for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ does the church ...*

"cherish" is a word of love, used only one other time in the NT, of Paul to his beloved people:

1 Thess 2:7 "*But we proved to be **gentle** among you, **as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children**. [same word as Eph 5:29, NKJV 'as a nursing mother cherishes her own children']⁸ **Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you** [NIV 'We **loved you so much that we were delighted** to share with you'] *not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become **very dear to us**.*"*

That's gospel driven love. That's how Christ cherishes the church, Paul says in Ephesians 5:29 (and you can turn back there) using the same Greek word translated "cherishes." It's the fond affection of a mother for her cherished baby she nurses and holds close to her heart as very dear to her, the most preeminent love language Paul can appeal to. That's how Christ loves the church and how Christ calls us to love our wives, with the gospel, and with our lives. It's a gentleness and tender care to one very dear, cherishing, treasuring.

We sang earlier of how deep God's love is to us who are wretches to make us His treasure, language from Dt. 7:6 (NKJV) ...*God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all* ... Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me and that made a wretch like me to be a treasure that He cherishes!

That phrase "*special treasure above all*" is repeated several times for the chosen people of God (Deuteronomy 14:2, 26:18, Exodus 19:5, etc.). Psalm 83:3 calls us God's "*treasured ones*" (NASB). And because of His great love for us, He moves in our heart so we find His gospel of the kingdom to be a treasure we'd do anything for (Mt. 13:44-45). Like Moses in Heb. 11:26 we find in Christ "*greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.*" In Christ are "*all the treasures of God's attributes* (Col 2:3). We trust and treasure Him.

When the gospel shines the light of Christ on our dark hearts and we're saved, "*we have this treasure in earthen vessels/jars of clay*" (2 Cor. 4:6-7) and so we should no longer seek to store up treasure on earth, but treasure in heaven (Mt 6:19-20). Jesus added to that "*for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (v. 21).

That's the principle of preeminent love Paul applies to marriage. The Lord treasures and cherishes His chosen bride (Eph 5:29) and because of His love, I'm called to treasure and cherish my bride. It is an application of what Jesus called the 2 greatest commands. It is because in the gospel God's love makes wretches into treasures and makes us who were once turned off by Christ to treasure Him, that preeminent gospel love drives my love for my treasured wife, as precious as my own flesh and blood is to me. Paul says in Eph 5:29 *no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it* ...

The preeminence of this love, the highest love he appeals to, is the love we have for our own precious flesh we so naturally cherish. Some of us may think as we read that verse, "that's not true that no one hates his or her flesh; my sister says she hates her body when she looks in the mirror." She may say that, but why is she looking at it in the mirror so much if she hates it so much? If I detest the Dallas Cowboys, do I put their picture up on my mirror and gaze at it each day and when they're not looking good, do I complain that I wish they were doing better? No, but because *she loves herself*, she wishes her flesh looked better and keeps looking at it. Hand her a picture with a group of people, including her in it, and ask her who she looks at first when she looks at the picture. Who do you look at first when you see a picture for the first time? We want to see how we look, don't we? Do we zoom in immediately to focus on people we hate and never want to look at? No and we don't hate ourselves.

Man naturally *loves his own flesh*, v. 29 says, and v. 31 says a wife is *one flesh* with him, so love her, lastly with **A Providing Love**

The other word/example in v. 29 is *nourishing* (present tense verb, continually we nourish ourselves everyday). Do we nourish and nurture people we hate and wish they would die? Do we daily seek out and think about people we can't stand so we can nourish them? No, but we nourish ourselves, proving Paul's point. Remember Dr. Street's example of college student who said she hated herself, but he observed her in the cafeteria finding the best possible apple for herself in the lunch line? Why not the worst and most rotten one? She didn't truly hate her flesh but she nourishes and cherishes it.

Our problem isn't that we need to love ourselves more ... our love for self causes our problems because things aren't what we expect them to be for someone like us who we love and esteem so highly that we think things should be so much better for someone like us! It's natural to take care of my own welfare and well-being, but I need to extend that same care and concern and love toward others. Our problem isn't a lack self-esteem or self-love. My problem is a lack of love for others on the same level of the love I have for me.

I love all my wife's relatives, but I love her husband most of all. This text calls this self-loving husband to love his wife most of all. Jesus calls me to love my wife *like I love me*, like *Jesus loves me*. For better or for worse He cherishes us. In health or sickness He nourishes us as v. 30 says '*because we are members of His body.*' For richer/poorer He provides all our needs according to His riches

Voddie Baucham gives his response to the type of man who says 'I can't go love my wife, you don't understand what she's like, man!'

"No, I do understand. You said for better or for worse, right? This is worse. Go love your wife. You said in sickness and health, right? This is sickness. Go love your wife. You said till death do us part. She is still living. You are not through yet. Go love your wife." ...

But he continues to try to evade his biblical responsibility: "You don't understand, brother. I don't even feel like that anymore. I don't even see her as my wife anymore."

VB: *'Ok, fine. The Bible says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Your wife is your closest neighbor. Go love your neighbor.'*

"Well, she is not even my neighbor anymore. I moved out, man"

VB: *'That's fine. Jesus says, "By this all men will know you are my disciples if you have love one for another ... Go love her ..."*

"But," he objects to that. "Well, I don't even think she is saved."

VB: *'That's cool. Jesus said, "Love your enemies." So she is your wife, she is your neighbor, she is your sister in Christ [part of the 'one another' or even if she acts like] your enemy. It really doesn't matter. You have no choice. Go obey God and love your wife.'*⁸

Love her with a *Practical Love* (v. 28, practical needs of our body)

Love her with a *Preeminent Love* (v. 29, "*cherishes ... as Christ does the church*")

Love her with a *Providing Love* (v. 29-30, "*nourishes...as Christ does the church*")

³⁰ *because we are members of His body.*

The analogy from anatomy is that nourishment flows from a head to the members of the body, and v. 23 says the husband is the head of his wife, and therefore nourishment should flow from him to her. And as you love in those other ways, the passionate love can grow.

We grow in connection to each other as joined members of a body. Verse 30 is talking about the church, that we who make up the bride of Christ are members of His body. That's why we join ourselves to and become members of a local body of Christ to express this reality and because body parts grow when joined together as united members of a body, that's the language here and in 4:15-16, and not being members of a body can affect or hinder our growth. And loving headship/leadership helps our growth (4:15, 5:26). Being members with each other should motivate us to speak the truth (4:25, 4:15-16) to build up this body we are members of.

Joining ourselves as members to the body of Christ we're part of is one way to express love to each other in the body of Christ. It not only shows love and submission to a church's leadership, but it frees up greater ways to serve and love other members in it. It's a way to express our love and commitment to one another in a public way as a united bride of Christ that He loves and commits to despite our blemishes (5:27), when we sin He doesn't ditch us or divorce us, and He doesn't throw away us His body parts (v. 30).

How do you become a member of this body? We want to be sure you're a member of His. Get our application packets in back or online, read doctrinal statement/convictions, philosophy of ministry, and the app asks if you want to come under the Elders for shepherding/care. We ask you to answer questions about your testimony to see if you know the gospel and your life evidences it's been changed by it. If you haven't been baptized since then, Scripture calls you to come under the waters of baptism in submission to Christ's commission "*make disciples ... baptizing them.*" That's what some among us will be obeying this afternoon at our baptism. Baptized followers of Christ are encouraged to join as members, get involved. That's normal Christianity. We express in local churches v. 30, that we're "*members of His body.*"

Christianity expresses outwardly what is already true spiritually. 1 Cor. 12:13 says we are spiritually baptized into a body, and that is why we are physically baptized and join a body of believers, to express outwardly to others what God has already done inwardly. If someone says "I'm already a member of His body universally, so I don't need to become a member of His body locally," I would say it's actually *why you should* become a member, like baptism, an outward expression of the spiritual reality that v. 30 is speaking about.

Why does the "member" word or concept keep coming up? You'll have to ask Paul when you get to heaven, but being a member of a body is one of his favorite biblical analogies of church life—not just unconnected pieces that can be put together temporarily on Sunday—like Mr. Potato Head, where you put body parts together one day, then take them apart till next time your friends come to the play room. The language of 4:15-16 is that we're joined to the head and each part is in living vital union contributing to the body's growth. The body is in submission to Christ's headship and the leadership He gives (4:11) and every part helps grow the body (see 4:12-16).

And in 5:29-30 the church is the context in which Christ nurtures us and we grow more like Him (v. 27). And just as submitting to Christ's headship/leadership as members of His body in a church is for our good and growth, so is a wife's submission to a husband who she is one flesh/body with. And most of all, submitting to Christ, and our relationship to Christ, is about the gospel (5:32).

The gospel tells us Christ loved the church, His bride, His body, and the gospel tells a husband to love his bride as his body (v. 28), be her loving headship/leadership (v. 25) to help her grow (v. 26). And the gospel gives a husband the power and pattern for this love

Christ doesn't love His bride because she's so beautiful, like King Ahasuerus who chose Esther as the most beautiful and then after a year of beauty treatments, marries her (Esther 2). King Jesus chose His bride in the ugliness of sin, then cleans her up (v. 26, Ezek 16).

Christ doesn't love His body because we're so great, but He loves despite our problems and blemishes then washes them off (v. 27). I may not love everything about my body all the time, but I nourish it, ensure it has what it needs. If I believe my wife is my body, I'll nourish her, even if I don't love everything about her all the time.

Nourishing is a providing love, nurture, feed, care for, tend to needs. And that natural impulse to provide for our body's needs is how God designed the head in marriage to be for his body and his bride. Christ nourishes the church, v. 29 says, as His body and bride, and that's what He calls a husband to do for his bride as his own body.

What are some things in context this providing love provides for?

- It would include the physical—the husband is to provide for his wife by work (if man shall not work he shall not eat). A wife can work/help support him but the head is responsible
- In v. 26, there is a regular washing like we do for our body, but with terms sanctify, cleanse – spiritual, not just physical
- Many commentators say in context the Word that washes is the gospel. I don't think v. 26 is water baptism, literal H₂O, but the analogy is washing with water of our physical body, and if I love my wife as my body, I'll make sure spiritually she has the regular washing she needs in the Word/gospel

If I'm to love her as Christ loved the church, how did Jesus love? Ultimately in dying (v. 26), but v. 26 may think of the night before:

Jn 13:1: ...*Jesus knowing that His hour had come...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end...* [in v. 4 He] *got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.* ⁵ *Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded ...* ³⁴ *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. [repeated in 13:35, 15:12, 17, etc.]*

And Jesus there applied water's washing to what the Word does:

John 15:3 *"You are already clean because of the word..."*

John 17:17 *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" ¹⁹ ... that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."*

As we think how to apply Eph 5:26, Christ in the upper room helps (read and study John 13-17)

- He loved one who didn't want that washing initially (Peter) and He washed the feet of one who didn't love Him (Judas)
- He spoke of biblical things at a meal, prayed for/with them

- He encouraged the church/bride by truths of Word (Jn 14)
- He didn't just bark out orders (nor should I with my wife), His providing love provided them an example (John 13:15)
- The Head of the church humbly stooped to be her servant
- His gospel grace is available to help us who humbly ask

¹ Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Shepherd Press, Wapwallopen, PA, 2007), p. 25.

² William Cowper, "There is a Fountain."

³ Adapted from one of my favorite quotes of Thomas Watson: "Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet." Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, reprint 1987), p. 63.

⁴ Larry McCall, *Loving Your Wife As Christ Loves the Church* (BMH Books, Winona Lake, IN, 2009), p. 125.

⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books), p. 201.

⁶ Jim Newheiser, "Solving Marriage Problems," message # 25,

<http://www.ibcd.org/resources/messages/category/marriage/>

⁷ Adapted from Wayne Mack, *A Homework Manual for Biblical Living*, Volume 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing), p. 42–45.

⁸ Adapted from Voddie Baucham, "Gospel Healing for Hurting Marriages,"

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=5409160500>