Sermon Series: The Christ-Centered Family
Sermon Title: Becoming a Godly Husband

Text: **Ephesians 5:25-33 -- 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.**

Introduction: This message is the 2nd in a series entitled "**The Christ-Centered Family**." THIS MORNING I WANT TO FOCUS ON THE ROLE OF A GODLY MAN AS IT RELATES TO THE FAMILY, PARTICULARLY IN MARRIAGE. As we have already noted, it seems that the family as the first institution ordained of God has suffered as we have drifted away from the Biblical pattern for relationships. ***Four words in bold type inside the window of a Hollywood jewelry store say it all, "We rent wedding rings***." The number one topic on the critic's list today is marriage. You talk about bad press. You talk about a joke in the office. If you doubt what I'm saying just listen the next time someone you know announces his or her future plans for matrimony to his friends. Don't say anything. Just listen. Listen for any WORDS OF AFFIRMATION and then compare those with the SARCASTIC REMARKS and BITTER JABS. **In most cases, you would think the person had just announced the purchase of a 22-foot-long python rather than sharing plans to spend the rest of his life with the woman he loves**.

Certainly, this isn't a reflection of God's design for marriage. When He created it, God designed it to be a blessing. The Bible tells us that He had in mind at least FOUR PURPOSES for marriage.

- **FOR COMPANIONSHIP** (**Genesis 2:18 -- Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him**”**). In the creation account, God created Adam first. It wasn’t until a little while later that He created Eve.** This meant that Adam was alone and knew it. God wanted him to discover his need for companionship when he named the

animals. Adam came to realize that <u>while all of them male and female</u>, there was not yet a suitable helper fit for him. The Bible tells us that his situation was "**not good**". That's why God made Eve. SO THAT ADAM WOULD HAVE SOMEONE TO SHARE HIS LIFE WITH. It may interest you to know that the place where Adam lived (**Eden**) means "**pleasure or delight**,' but how could it be either for Adam if he was feeling the pain from loneliness? Eve became his companion for life!

- **FOR REPRODUCTION** (**Genesis 1:28 -- And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth).** Part of Adam and Eve's commissioning was to **'fill the earth and subdue it**.' This could only happen if they had children who had children who had children, etc. You kind of get the picture! They had to reproduce and as far as I know, a man cannot do that by himself.
- **FOR PURITY**. God created Adam as a sexual being and then provided the person to whom He could be joined physically for the purpose of reproduction. Adam and Eve were commanded to "**leave and cleave**" in such a way that they would become **ONE FLESH**. It's clear in Scripture that as humans multiplied God never intended for them to have children with just anyone who came along like so many do today. When He created marriage, it was meant to be a MONOGAMOUS AND INDIVISIBLE relationship in which ***<u>a man and a woman</u>*** were to become one in every way -- **spiritually, socially, intellectually and physically**. In some ways, this last characteristic is what sets the marriage bond apart from every other relationship a person might have. After all, we can (and should be) **spiritually united** to other believers (**Ephesians 4:3 – make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**). We can also form close **bonds of friendship** with those we're not married to (**Jonathan loved David as himself – 1 Samuel 18:3**). And we can certainly be **like-minded** with others (**Philippians 2:2 -- make my joy complete by being of the same mind**). ***<u>But nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to become</u>*** **<u>one physically</u>** ***<u>with someone other than our spouse. And this happens through the act of sexual intimacy</u>***. **It is through this act that God glues two people together**. That's why the Bible calls any attempt to satisfy our sexual desires apart from the will of God displayed in marriage ***<u>sexual immorality</u>***. And here's what it says about that. **The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord** (**1 Corinthians 6:13**). **Listen: sexual promiscuity never satisfies us because it is by nature contrary to the will of the Lord**.

MANY YEARS AGO, NOW, when I was on staff with Student Venture, a couple of students and I were driving around asking people two questions and recording their responses on video to show later that week at our large group meeting. The questions were … **(1) What is the purpose of sex?** and (**2**) **On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is sexual intimacy to a relationship between a man and a woman**? At one point in the day, we drove through a one-hour photo drop-off booth where they would develop your film and return your pictures within sixty minutes. We pulled up and I asked the girl if we could ask her the questions and film her responses on video. She said, "**This is weird**," to which I responded, "**No, we're not weird. If this makes you uncomfortable we'll drive on. We're just a student organization that is asking people to share their views on sexual intimacy so we learn from what is said**." Then she asked, "**What's the name of your organization**?" I gave it to her – **Student Venture**. And again she said, "**This is weird**." Sensing that we were making her uncomfortable, I thanked her for her time and started to pull away. That's when she asked, "**Do you have a group at Northbrook High School that's led by Tom and Cathy Atchison**?" I said, '**Yes, we do**." And all of a sudden, she blurted out, "**I became a Christian through Student Venture. I graduated a year ago. Today, I'm living with my boyfriend and I'm absolutely miserable**." To which I said, "**This is weird, really weird**." I then asked, "**Would you like to know why you're so miserable**?" She shook her head up and down and I proceeded to tell her that she was living outside the will of God. The only way she could find joy again was to repent and start living a pure life. I explained that she either needed to break off the relationship or marry the man because God designed intimacy for a husband and wife.

So far, we've shared three reasons why God gave marriage to mankind … **COMPANIONSHIP, REPRODUCTION and PURITY**. There is a fourth one that I want to spend the rest of our time looking at this morning and here it is. ***GOD GAVE MARRIAGE TO BE A PICTURE OF CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS BRIDE, THE CHURCH.*** He created Adam and Eve so that the two of them (and every subsequent husband and wife) might live in a loving and loyal relationship with one another, just as Christ's redeemed (called His bride – **Revelation 19:7**) are meant to enjoy a deep, personal and exclusive relationship with Him.

Unfortunately, this is seldom how marriage is portrayed. More frequently it is viewed as **a FIGHTING, UNFAITHFUL, DISCONTENTED, BITTER RELATIONSHIP** that ends in separation or divorce. That is not how the Bible pictures marriage, however! Our passage from **Ephesians 5** portrays it as something very special, capable of reaching its highest potential and purpose when ***a husband and wife***

are each filled with the Holy Spirit and mutually submitting to one another. This morning, we'll discover what this means for the man. In the next message, we'll consider a few implications for the woman.

Paul begins by informing us what it looks like when a man submits himself to his wife. He says, "**Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her…".** This kind of submission does not negate that the man is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church (**verse twenty-three**) **but simply spells out how the husband can best illustrate Christ's headship through loving sacrifice and service to his wife**. Here are some thoughts from **Ephesians 5** about THE MEANING AND MANNER of this kind of love.

THE MEANING OF LOVE. In commanding husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church, Paul was forbidding men from being domineering and abusive in the marriage relationship. **How can we be that way if the model that we're to pattern ourselves after is our Lord's love for His followers**? The Bible reminds us that "**The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many**" (**Matthew 20:28**). It is significant that here God commands the man to LOVE his wife, not to LEAD her. That's because the two are so intertwined that we can say **the man who loves his wife will be a servant leader to her**! This is how it works. The love of a husband is never reduced to mere feelings or passions (though they are important), but it is most importantly defined by his actions. **Authentic love isn't something we fall into, but a choice we make to do what is for the highest good for our spouses regardless of the cost to ourselves**. Listen to Paul's description of love from **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**: **Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends**. **Don't miss the fact that every virtue of love calls for sacrifice and servitude**. MEN, THIS IS HOW WE'RE TO LOVE OUR WIVES BECAUSE IT IS HOW THE LORD LOVES HIS BRIDE, THE CHURCH.

THE MANNER OF LOVE. This kind of love is very different from most of what we see on TV or on social media. Note how it is described.

- **IT IS A LOVE THAT GIVES**. Christ gave Himself up for the church and that's what the SPIRIT-FILLED man does for his wife. ***Those husbands who live according to the sinful flesh are self-centered***. They act as if their wives exist solely to please them. Paul says this should never be the case in a Christian

marriage where the man is called to "**die to himself**." **Galatians 5:24** tells us, "**Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires**." ***The husband who follows Christ is primarily focused on what he can do for his wife, and not what she can do for him***. He has come to understand that love must be more than a euphoric feeling if it is going to bring marital happiness. According to **researcher Arthur Brooks** (writing in *The Atlantic*), ***the secret to happiness isn't falling in love; it's staying in love***. He writes: This does not mean just sticking together legally: Research shows that being married only accounts for 2 percent of subjective well-being later in life. The important thing for well-being is **relationship satisfaction**, and that depends on what is referred to as "**companionate love**"—love based ***less on*** passionate highs and lows and ***more on*** [friendship], stable affection, mutual understanding, and commitment. **Passionate love, which relies on attraction, does not typically last beyond the novelty of the relationship** … As one researcher bluntly summarizes the evidence in THE JOURNAL OF HAPPINESS STUDIES, "***The well-being benefits of marriage are much greater for those who also regard their spouse as their best friend***." This is where the words of Jesus come into play: **Greater love has no man than this, that he might lay down his life for a friend** (**John 15:13**). LOVE THAT LASTS IS LOVE THAT GIVES.

- **IT IS A LOVE THAT GUARDS** (**Christ gave himself up for the church, 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). Our Lord sacrificed Himself for the church so that we could be pure and holy**. This is also the aim of a Christ-centered man when it comes to marriage. ***He naturally hates anything that might defile his wife***, but instead, protects her from any threat to her virtue. HE WILL NEVER KNOWINGLY LEAD HIS WIFE INTO SIN. HE IS ONLY CONCERNED FOR HER HOLINESS. ***That's because the godly husband recognizes his role as the spiritual leader in his home and that the measure of how he's doing is his wife's growth in Christ***!
- **IT IS A LOVE THAT CARES** **(28 … 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).** Have you ever noticed that those who say that they hate their bodies still feed, clothe and bathe them? **Why? It's normal and natural to do that. In the same way, it is normal and natural for Christian men to care IN A SIMILAR WAY for their wives because they are one flesh.** This means that when she hurts, he hurts. When she has a need, he

should embrace it as his own. ***Paul's point is that to neglect her is the equivalent of self-neglect, something no reasonable man would do***.

- **IT IS A LOVE THAT LASTS** (**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).** Just as Christ will never abandon His bride, the church (**Hebrews 13:5 – I will never leave you or forsake you**), so the kind of love that a godly man has for his wife will outlast any trial and overcome any obstacle.

Let's wrap this up for you men by sharing a few ways for you to show your love for the woman you married:

- **Be considerate of your wife**. It wasn't only the Apostle Paul who wrote to Christian men about loving their wives. **Peter** did the same in **1 Peter 3:7**. He said, "**Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered**." He explains that ***men are expected to "live" with their wives in an understanding way that leads to loving and considerate care at every turn***. This kind of care is based on the personal insight that we acquire from living with our mates and coming to understand her feelings and motivations. (**See *The 5 Love Languages* by Gary Chapman - Quality Time, Words of Affirmation, Gifts, Acts of Service, Physical Touch**)
- **Be a servant to your wife**. In New Testament times the status of a woman was certainly higher among Jewish men than in the rest of the Middle Eastern World. However, in Jewish law, a woman was deemed to be a thing. A man owned sheep, cattle and his wife. She could not leave him, but he could most certainly leave her at a moment's notice...although a rejected wife did have to be given a certificate of divorce, enabling her to remarry. **The New Testament brought a revolutionary concept of marriage between believers. Christian men now have obligations to their wives**. A major one is to care for one's wife realizing that she is the physically weaker vessel. ***Husbands are called to do those things for her that she cannot do for herself***.
- **Be respectful of your wife**. Peter reminds his readers that Christian wives are ***fellow heirs of the grace of life***. This means they deserve our RESPECT. **Note what Peter says here about men who recognize and treat their wives as their equals**. As we give them our respect, we gain a hearing from God and our prayers will be answered. THE OPPOSITE IS ALSO TRUE. THE FAILURE TO TREAT

OUR WIVES AS FELLOW HEIRS OF THE GRACE OF LIFE MEANS OUR PRAYERS WILL BE HINDERED.

Conclusion: **Because love is about giving, marriage, particularly for the husband, is about giving. It is about placing the needs of your wife before your own and loving her with the sacrificial and lasting love of Christ**. On a television talk show some time ago, the guest was **Ricardo Montalban**, an actor, well-known for his romantic roles in film. Predictably, the host asked him, "**What makes a great lover**?" I suspect that the vast majority of the people watching the show expected the standard macho-playboy response. Much to the surprise of the host, his audience and everyone watching at home, he answered, "**A great lover is someone who can satisfy one woman for her entire life, and who can be satisfied by one woman for his entire life. A great lover isn't someone who goes from woman to woman to woman. Any dog can do that.**" And in case you're wondering, Ricardo was married at twenty-four to Georgiana Young and remained with her for sixty-three years until she died in 2007. I DON'T KNOW IF HE KNEW THE LORD OR NOT, BUT IT'S CLEAR RICARDO MONTALBAN KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT HOW TO LOVE A WOMAN AND REAPED THE BENEFIT FOR OVER SIX DECADES. Men, as we lay down our lives for our wives, we, too, will reap the benefit of a holy and loving marriage.