

HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES!

Ephesians 5:25 (KJV) "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"

Wives are commanded by God to submit to their own husbands as unto the LORD in everything. However, husbands are forbidden to treat their wives like slaves, to be at their beck and call whenever they like. God's command to Christian husbands is just as final as it is for Christian wives. The instructions given here are not negotiable. If the believer is a Christian husband, then he must obey without any reservation or debate. There can never be any justification for disobedience.

I. The Christian Husband's Weakness – Just as the weakness of the wife in every home is her desire to usurp the authority of the husband in the home, the husband's weakness is that he tends to love more than one woman at the same time, even when he is married! This weakness is not only of married men but all men since the time of the Fall. One of the first sins committed by fallen men was bigamy (cf. Genesis 4:9). There are numerous examples of men, sadly even Christian men, falling into this sin of marrying many wives. King David, the man after God's own heart, had a total of nine wives in his lifetime, which is a sad testimony of this weakness and man's propensity for loving more than one woman at the same time!

God has set the highest standards for the local church which is to be the end time witness to a world in spiritual darkness. Never before has the standard of holiness for God's leaders been higher than in the time of the New Testament. Local churches all over the world are to bear a holy witness for Christ, who came and died and rose from the dead. This truth is seen in the list of qualifications set by God for bishops who bear the highest office in the local church (cf. 1Timothy 3:1-7). One of the requirements is that he must be "a husband of one wife." This is not a reference to his marital status which would hardly be a standard as many unbelievers remain married to only one wife all their lives. That is why a bishop who is a widower may remarry and will not be disqualified from eldership. This is a spiritual standard. Literally, the phrase means "a one woman man." The bishop may not be a married man but if he likes to flirt with women or has lustful desires, then he is disqualified from becoming a bishop.

The Christian husband is commanded by God to love his wife. This is possible because God the Holy Spirit lives in every born again believer. The Holy Spirit helps the Christian husband to love his wife only. This means that he has eyes only for his wife. His love interest is in his wife only. The sin of the lust of the flesh is put away from his heart and mind and life. The sin of fornication and adultery flees from his heart and life and mind as well. He is able to do this with the enabling of the Holy Spirit. That is why this command is only for the Christian husband. The unbelieving husband cannot do this even if he wants to. He does not have the Holy Spirit to help him.

It does not matter if the husband is married to a non-Christian wife. He must still love her in the same manner, with the help of the Holy Spirit. This statement must be qualified. This is not a case of the Bible allowing a believer to marry an unbeliever. This kind of unequal yoke is

a sin against God. Only when there is genuine repentance on the part of the believing spouse can the situation be salvaged, making him/her right in the sight of God again. This does not mean that the consequence of the sin of marrying an unbelieving spouse disappears. The disobedient but now repentant believing spouse must live with the consequences of his or her action even as he/she pleads daily for God's mercies to be upon him/her and the family.

The believing spouse may have come to know Christ after marriage. He and his wife were married as unbelievers and did not make the Christian vows. The husband later became a Christian. He is to love his wife according to the Christian vow. It is as if he had made the vow! Under the Christian vow, only death will part them and under all circumstances they are to remain married, in sickness or in health, for richer or poorer. This is not an exception but is to be the norm for every Christian husband. There is no exceptional clause for him to get out of loving his own wife in all circumstances. It is therefore imperative that every Christian man and woman realize this truth so that they do not enter into marriage unadvisedly but circumspectly and with the fear of God in their hearts.

II. An Unconditional Love – Just as the reason for the Christian wife's submission to her own husband is the fact that he is her husband, the Christian husband is to love his wife because she is his wife! This is God's command and the Christian husband must obey unconditionally. He can obey because God has equipped him with this ability to love at the time of his conversion; for the love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost (cf. Romans 5:5). The Greek word for love is "agape love", which means that it is an unconditional and sacrificial love. Only a Christian can obey this command of the LORD. The unbelieving husband does not have this unconditional love. The Christian husband loves his wife regardless of her response or actions toward him. This is what agape love means because this is how God loves every believer.

The Christian husband will never take advantage of his Christian wife's submission to him. Christ never took advantage of the church. He will always do what is best for the church. The Christian husband will always want what is best for his wife according to Holy Scriptures. His feelings for her are not "mushy" and sentimental but those born out of an unshakable commitment based upon a deeply rooted conviction from God. The Christian husband believes that God has chosen his wife for him. There is no mistake. He loves her because Christ chose her for him to be his helper suitable for him, regardless of whether he was married to her before he was born again or after. God is sovereign and His sovereignty reigns from the moment of his existence in his mother's womb. That is the reason he must love his wife in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer and until death parts them. Since death is in the hands of his heavenly Father, this means that only his heavenly Father can break this marriage vow.

The Christian husband does not love his wife because she is beautiful, or because they are intellectually compatible - these will fade away. Such carnal reasons for loving the wife will make the husband/wife relationship short-lived. Carnal reasons for getting married and remaining married will not ensure a lasting marriage. Carnal reasons are not unconditional. It

is a very sad thing when couples who have been married for 40 or even 50 years file for divorce. They remained married for all the carnal reasons such as for their children's sake or for their financial security's sake or because of peer pressures; marriages based upon these reasons are very superficial and without joy and depth of relationship. The husband and the wife tolerate each other and remain married for the sake of appearances. It is even sadder when some Christians do the same. They do so because they refuse to submit to God's will for their lives and in their relationship.

When unconditional love is exercised in the hearts of both Christian spouses, the marriage is joyous and Christ is honoured. The wife submits to her own husband. The husband loves his wife unconditionally and sacrificially. Their children would also be blessed because the home environment is the safe haven of every child. To live in a home where Christ is Lord, and father and mother love one another and live in obedience to God's Word may be rare but not impossible. In fact, the LORD expects every Christian husband and wife to provide such a home for their children to grow up in. Their children will see Christ in them as they witness their loving relationship day in and day out. They would surely want to know Christ because of their parents. What a tremendous joy it is to have such a blessed home and the onus for such a home lies primarily with the head of the home.

III. The Head of the Wife – The head of every home is the husband, whether Christian or not. In the case of the Christian husband, he has the Holy Spirit and agape love to enable him so that he has no excuse not to succeed. The basis for headship is not whether the husband is cleverer, or earns more than his wife, or is stronger, or can talk better. It is none of these earthly requirements. The reason for him being the head of the home is simply that he is the man, i.e. the husband! Everything else is secondary to this truth! God made him a man and chose for him his wife. As the head of the home he provides for the needs of the home. These needs include the spiritual, the physical as well as the emotional. Everything in the home is his responsibility. He directs and guides the home in the direction of God according to Holy Scriptures. He ensures that his wife grows spiritually. Therefore, he encourages her to attend Bible Study in the church. He ensures that she grows in grace and in the knowledge of Christ so that she becomes the best Christian wife and most godly mother to their children. His wife may take care of the home and makes decisions for the upkeep of the home, but ultimately he is still overall responsible. The children's spiritual wellbeing is his responsibility. Feeding and clothing the children is easy. Feeding and clothing them with spiritual food and garments require him to firstly be knowledgeable of God's Word. He cannot guide his children spiritually when he is not spiritual because he does not know the Word of God. Therefore, he must take the lead to ensure that he has a good spiritual diet to grow in the LORD and to be a godly head in his home that God has given to him. Attending Bible Study classes and night classes in FEBC will help a great deal. Growth takes time. There is no short cut and it is never too late to start.

As the head of his home, he has to make this his top priority and make the necessary sacrifices to ensure that his spiritual life is in tip top condition so that he can be a godly

husband and father to his wife and children. He needs to remember that the only gifts from God that he can bring with him to heaven are his children, and not his precious car and beautiful house! He must work toward eternity and not material comforts. Jesus warns us in **Luke 12:22-23 (KJV)**, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. **23** The life is more than meat, and the body is *more* than raiment." Whenever there is strife in the home, it is his responsibility and duty to bring about a swift resolution and reconciliation. To not to do so is sin. He must not allow strife and sin to remain in the home between his wife and him, his children and him or between his wife and the children. If he quarrels with his wife, he needs to make the first move toward reconciliation. This he must do all the time. To ignore or abdicate this duty is sin. There is no justification for this failure and sin in his life. He must pray and ask God to make a way for him to bring about reconciliation and not bring shame to the name of Christ any longer!

He must pray for the family every day. It is his privilege and duty to do so. The husband cannot love his wife, as Christ loves the church by dying for the church, without God's help. His own strength will fail him because it is a lifelong endeavour, till death parts them. He needs to pray and ask the LORD to help him love his wife daily with God's love. He must pray for his wife's spiritual wellbeing, that she will love the Lord with all her heart, soul and mind. He prays for the children that they will know Christ at the earliest age possible by God's grace and mercy. He prays that the LORD will grant to him and his wife strength and the heart to obey His holy Word so that the children will see Christ in them. He prays that as parents they will not be a stumbling block to their children. He prays for their safety and that when the children grow up, they will want to do the Lord's will in their lives. He prays because he knows that his struggle is not against flesh and blood but always against spiritual forces and principalities in high places. And when he prays he knows that the LORD will help him and watch over the children wherever they are.

The Christian husband's example par excellence to emulate is Christ. He does not look to other husbands and he does not compare himself with other husbands. Christ's love for the church is His example. He must be prepared to die for his family. Since he is prepared to die for them he must also be prepared to live for them. Home to every Christian father and mother must be a sanctuary. A sanctuary is more just a secluded place away from the hustle and bustle of the outside world. It is a place where Christ is honoured and the Word of God obeyed. It is a place of worship and prayer. In every obedient Christian home, lives are shared and moulded to conform to the image of Christ. Christ has entrusted the husband cum father as head of his home to bring this to pass with the motive of honouring Christ and obeying the Word. This is a simple formula that every Christian husband can obey. Are you doing it Christian husband/father? Is your home a home where Christ is Lord and Christ is pleased to call His home? Amen.