

37. Love your closest neighbor – Part 3

January 11, 2009

It's great to be a guy. I don't have to worry about putting on make-up every morning, or trying several different sets of clothes before I decide which one I would wear. In many ways, it seems that we, men in general, got the better end of the deal. BUT God put more responsibilities on men than women!

Before we get into a serious study, here are a few reasons why it is better to be a man:

- The occasional well-rendered belch is practically expected.
- Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds flat except when we talk about our hobbies with our buddies.
- A five-day vacation requires only one suitcase or less.
- Men get extra credit for the slightest act of thoughtfulness.
- Usually everything on man's face stays its original color.
- Three pairs of shoes are more than enough.
- Men don't have to stop and think of which way to turn a nut on a bolt.
- The same hair style lasts for years, maybe decades.
- One wallet and one pair of shoes, one color, all seasons.
- Man can "do" his nails with a pocketknife.
- Man can do Christmas shopping for 25 relatives, on December 24th, in 45 minutes, flat.
- If two guys walk into a room with the exact same cloths, we become lifelong buddies instantly. No glare, no cat fight.

Last week we studied about what God wants wives to do. I hope and pray that you ladies practice what you have learned. It really doesn't do any good for you to learn a lot from the Word of God and not do.

This morning, we are going to have a in-depth study of what God wants us to learn to be godly husbands.

A. GOD'S COMMANDS TO THE HUSBANDS

1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, likewise, (1) dwell with them (2) with understanding, (3) giving honor to the wife, (4) as to the weaker vessel, and (5) as being heirs together of the grace of life, that (6) your prayers may not be hindered.

There are five commands and one warning from God to us within v. 7:

1) DWELL WITH THEM

A godly husband abides with his wife. He doesn't merely share a house with her, he truly shares lives with her.

2) WITH UNDERSTANDING

A man was walking along a lake and stumbled over a lamp. He picked it up and rubbed it to see what it is. "Poof," a genie showed up out of the lamp and said, "I am at your service. You may have one wish." A true story... right!

The man grumbled and asked, "What happened to three wishes?" The genie said, "Come on, man. Bad economy and so many financial bail outs. No can do. You only have one wish." The man thought for a moment and said, "OK. I always want to go to Hawaii, but I am scared of flying. Can you make a bridge from California

to Hawaii?" The genie gasped, "Do you know how much concrete and steel it takes to build that long bridge? Come up with something else."

Again, the man thought about his one wish carefully and finally said, "Alright. I want to understand a woman's mind." The genie scratched his goatee chin and blurted out, "Do you want that bridge two lanes or four lanes?"

Let's get serious. You can understand your wife better by submitting your life to God first and loving her as Christ loved the church.

3) GIVING HONOR TO THE WIFE

A godly husband knows how to make his wife feel honored. Though she submits to him according to the instruction from the Bible, he makes sure that she does not feel like she is a slave under a task master.

4) AS TO THE WEAKER VESSEL

The words "weaker vessel" should be considered as a precious china. You don't put a bull in a china closet. I know that some ladies can whip guys easily with one arm tied on their backs, but generally women are not as strong as men.

A godly husband recognizes whatever limitations his wife has physically, and does not demand more from her than what is appropriate. And he should treat her like precious and expensive china.

5) AS BEING HEIRS TOGETHER OF THE GRACE OF LIFE

A godly husband realizes that his spouse is not only his wife, but his sister-in-Christ. A part of their inheritance in the Lord is only realized in their common bond. 'Heirs together' reminds husbands that even though they have been given great authority within marriage, their wives are still equal to them in spiritual privilege and eternal importance. They are 'Joint Heirs.'

6) A WARNING FROM GOD - YOUR PRAYERS MAY NOT BE HINDERED

The failure to be a godly husband has spiritual consequences. It can and will hinder his prayer. The word "hindered" is 'ekkopto' in Greek which means "to cut out, cut off". We also see this word used in Matthew.

Matt. 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

That means literally God cuts off your prayer line to Him, so that He doesn't listen to you.

We learned about wives being submissive to their husbands. That does not mean that husbands can order them around like a rooster walking around with pompous attitude. If you do that and say, "I am the head of this family." Then your wife will say, "Oh yeah? I am the neck that turns the head."

B. WHAT DOES APOSTLE PAUL SAY ABOUT HUSBAND

Apostle Paul echoes what Peter teaches us in his letter to Ephesus.

Eph 5:25-28 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be

holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

1) Unconditional love

Each command God gives to husband start with 'Love.' By the way, the love here is "Agape" in Greek. Many of us know that it means unconditional love.

It means:

- loving your wife even if she burns your foods
- loving your wife even if she asks you to do something for her at the most important part of your favorite football team's game on TV
- loving your wife even if she ruins your favorite shirt
- loving your wife even if she treats you bad
- loving your wife even if she gain weight
- loving your wife even if she is getting old.

Just remember, she is not the only one who is getting older. So are you.

Your wife needs your affirmation of your love for her that you only love her no matter what.

Never forget that 'agape' is action, not just attitude or knowledge. Make a specific effort to do loving things for your wife daily in addition to what you already do. Please listen to her with the willing heart to consider and understand what your wife needs and desires, then acts to meet those longings.

2) Putting her before yourself

What did Christ do for His church? He died for the church. That is what the Lord wants us to do for our wives. Not only in our physical life, but also we should be willing to give up our desires for our wives, such as, giving up watching ball games or any program on TV for her; giving up reading newspaper at the dinner table; giving up fishing for your wife's 'HONEY-DO-LIST'. Yes, that is including going for blouse shopping with your wife without grumbling. She may try 40 different blouses from 10 different stores for five hours and still haven't found any blouse she likes and she thinks that it was fun, because you are there with her.

Marriage is about loving your wife before loving yourself, marriage is about putting her needs and desires before yours without expecting anything back from her. But the beauty of this kind of godly marriage relationship is that while you pour out your love of God to her, she would be grateful to you and she will do the same to you. That means that you are going to get what you want eventually, because she sees your love and wants to love you back.

You might think that I am telling you to be a wimp instead of a big macho man. Listen to me, my brothers, woman loves this kinds of godly sensitive man more than your idea of macho who only cares about his sexual desires.

You might say that I have been picking on men who watch ball games on TV a lot. Have you ever heard "Football Widow"? I don't believe that that they came up with the word for no reason.

Speaking of watching TV, a man and his wife are sitting in the living room and he says to her, "Just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetative state dependent on some machine. If that ever happens, just pull the plug." His wife gets up and unplugs the TV.

We, husbands, can be very insensitive to our wives. That translates as not caring about them. You might say, "I am not that detail-oriented," or "I don't want to do that kind of sissy stuff." Let's go back to the time when you were dating your wife before you guys got married. Did you feel the same insensitive way? I am sure that you went out of your ways to please her and win her heart. What happened? Why not now? Why did you stop?

I said this before: Do you know what the most efficient way to ruin your marriage is? Do absolutely nothing. Our marriages require constant cultivation, otherwise they get destroyed.

Loving your wife in sensitive ways and caring for her is not giving up your masculinity. As a matter of fact, being insensitive is downright dumb and ungodly.

Your wife is more important than your games on TV or your job. Some of you might say, "I am working this many hours for my wife." Nothing wrong with providing good things to your families. However, there is a difference between providing for your family and satisfying your conquest in the job at the expense of your family.

Our wives need the affirmation of our unconditional love over and over and over through our actions, not just words, not just one time.

3) Washing your wife with the Word of God

Eph 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

Washing your wives with the Word of God is an extremely important duty for all of us. However, it didn't say that we can use the Word of God as a battering ram to get what we want from our wives.

As the priest of the family, husbands need to study the Bible and minister to wives and children with the Word in the gentle spirit and love.

If you truly believe in God and really love your wife, you'll want her to be close to God as much as possible. You can do your devotion together, pray together and seek God's heart together. You will see how your wife's heart blossoms because of the Word you use to sanctify her and cleanse her. I would be the first one to tell you that how the Word of God ministers to my wife Karen and me every day.

C. THE DIFFERENCE OF INTIMACY BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN

When the word 'intimacy' is mentioned, women think about romantic dinner, wonderful and quiet ambience, candlelight, stunning sunset, cozy and curl up together in front of a fireplace. What does men think about? Sex, period. Obviously, there is a tremendous difference.

The problem with that is neither one lasts long. When all that sizzles is gone, it is not unusual to look for more sizzles in different direction with different person. That is why you hear the song called, "Looking for love in all the wrong places."

Some of you men think that you are a stud. Here is a true definition for a stud: It is a stupid 2 by 4 between two drywalls.

Women tend to give sex to have love, men tend to give love to have sex.

Guys, we must get out of our typical mentality about intimacy and get into the concept of the true relationship in the marriage is pleasing God and pleasing our wives, not ourselves selfishly.

Sex without signs of love is sure to create resentment from your wife. To be exact, if your wife does not feel or know your love for her and you are having sex with her to meet your own physical needs only, she feels like she is being raped or used. I am sure that none of us want that in our marriages.

D. PRACTICAL TIPS FOR HUSBANDS

Here are some tips for you husbands to practice to your wife from today:

1) **Spend time together – really listening to your wife because you want to understand her better. Of course, this means everything including television will be off! Give her your complete attention as long as she wants.**

2) **While you two are talking, look at your wife and move close to her so that she sees you giving full attention to her.**

3) **Do this often, so that you get comfortable to share your inmost thoughts with her.**

4) **Pay attention to your wife when other people are around. This will mean more to her than you can ever know.**

5) **Don't try to solve everything she has a problem with. She may not want you to do anything other than just listen to her and hold her close to you. Just lend your ears, shoulders and your heart.**

Remember, men need respect from their women, women need love from their men.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) **Be sensitive to your wife in words and actions to please her.**

Be genuine, be specific, be generous. You edify her with your spoken word.

2) **Let your wife know how precious and important she is to you publicly and privately.**

Do not express admiration for another woman unless you want wrath of your wife on yourself. Besides, this is never edifying to your wife. Keep your attention focused on her!

3) **Do not look down on your wife for anything.**

She is your God-given helper.

4) **Put your wife's needs and desires before yours.**

5) **Pray for her daily that God's will be done in her life.**