

Husbands, Love Your Wives

By Chuck LaMattina

Chicago, Illinois

A number of years ago there was a humorous article in The Saturday Evening Post titled, "The Seven Stages of the Married Cold." The article compared the state of marriage to the reaction of a husband to his wife's colds during seven years of marriage:

First year: "Sugar dumpling! I'm worried about my baby girl. You've got a bad sniffle and there's no telling about these things with all this strep around. I'm putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general check up and a good rest. I know the food is lousy, but I'll bring you food from Rossini's...I've got it all arranged."

Second year: "Listen darling, I don't like the sound of that cough. I've called Dr. Miller to rush over here. Now you go to bed like a good girl. Please?"

Third year: "Maybe you better lay down, honey; nothing like a little rest when you feel bad. I'll bring you something to eat. Have we got any soup?"

Fourth year: "Look dear, be sensible. After you feed the kids and get the dishes washed, you'd better hit the sack."

Fifth year: "Why don't you get yourself a couple of aspirin?"

Sixth year: "Why don't you just gargle or something, instead of sitting around barking like a seal?"

And finally, the seventh year: "For Pete's sake, stop sneezing! What are you trying to do, give me pneumonia?!"

Now, even though this is comical, it happens all too often that husbands can be like this with their wives in a number of ways. But this is a far cry from the standard set forth for husbands in God's Word in Ephesians 5. The apostle Paul writes,

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. (v. 25 NKJV)

This divine command for marital love is a bare knuckled punch at much of what the world sets forth as a standard for husbands. Taken to heart, this

command is staggering and the punch that it delivers flattens so many men because we often fall so far short. As husbands, we are commanded to love our wives with a willingness to sacrifice ourselves, even unto death! At first this may seem frightening, but it is also extremely beautiful, because when we love like this, we experience the death of our selfish old man, and the vibrant life of Christ!

This kind of love for our wives is a giving of not only all we have, but more importantly, all that we are. This is not a command to be a doormat. But it is a call to die to our own legitimate and supposed rights, to die to our own wishes and needs, and to live for the benefit of our wives. And this kind of love, and sacrifice is manly and liberating, and truly heroic, for it is according to the pattern set by Jesus Christ. Speaking to his disciples Jesus said,

"...you know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45)

What Christ has done for the church, we are to do for our wives.

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. (v. 25-27)

Husbands should love their wives in the same unreserved, selfless and sacrificial love that Christ loved the church. And we should do this that we might present our wives to ourselves as a glorious wife! This means that we must share the Word of God with our spouse on a regular basis comforting them and confronting them, and especially to inspire them with a vision of whom they are in Christ.

To love our wives like Christ loves the church also includes praying for them. Speaking about believers and Christ, Hebrews 7:25 says,

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Are we praying for our wives, making intercession for them? We ought to keep a list detailing our wives needs, and desires, fears and concerns, her abilities, and tasks, and we ought to make time each day to pray about these things. We ought to pray that our wives accomplish their God-given roles in the family, the church and the community. In Ephesians 5, Paul continues,

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 (v. 28, 29)

To love our wives as our own bodies is a grand thing. It means granting her the same importance that we give ourselves. It means that our wife's comfort is our comfort. Her adornment is our adornment. Her well being is our well being. In other words, we are to devote the same time and energy and thought to our wife as we do to our self. In doing this both husband and wife will be secure and happy. A good husband nourishes his wife; he is a conduit of God's love and grace, not a cul-de-sac. He provides for his wife's growth intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. This will take time, thought and commitment. Here are four practical points on how to give your wife your BEST.

Bless

Edify

Share

Touch

Bless: Speak well of your wife. Never make negative comments about her to anyone. Speak to her with positive, kind and good words, even if her speech is harsh and critical. You have the power to bless your marriage by the words you speak. You can also bless your wife by acts of loving kindness in matters both small and large. If we are to bless those who curse us, and do good to those who hate us (Mt. 5:44), how much more should we bless our wives?

Edify: Here is another biblical term used throughout the New Testament for encouraging and

building one another up spiritually. Romans 15:2 states,

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

Men, your wife is your closest neighbor, and she needs personal encouragement from you!

Share: This demands giving of yourself, listening to your wife, sharing experiences and developing a shared vision for your marriage and family. This too is a biblical principle: husbands and wives are to become one flesh! Acts 4:32 says,

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

If this kind of sharing of purpose and goods can happen within the church, surely it can happen in a marriage. Spend time together. Have fun together. Serve in the church together. Pray together. And finally,

Touch: God created us with thousands upon thousands of nerve endings in our skin. These are designed to sense and benefit from a loving touch. Many times when Jesus ministered to people he would touch them. You have Christ in you (Col. 1:27). Your touch tells your wife that she is loved and cherished. This will bring her comfort and emotional security.

Concluding the section on marriage in Ephesians 5, Paul writes,

For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. `For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.` This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself...(v. 30-33)

This is a great mystery – two becoming one flesh! But it portrays an intimacy and a love unknown in so much of our world. It is an intimacy designed for a man and a woman and for the Lord and his church. What a blessing!

How could we ever be more interested in the newspaper's latest report on some government scandal, or in yesterday's sports scores, or in our

own hobbies or activities, than the voice and the dreams, and concerns of the person who has just shared our bed, and who will share our life today and tomorrow? It is her voice and her life that

promises love and respect and joy. She can provide us with true satisfaction and emotional security.

So let us love our wives sacrificially, and invest in them spiritually and romance them extravagantly, for we are heirs together of the grace of life!