

Love and Respect

Ephesians 5:22-27

The Lord always gives the best instructions that provide for the peace and happiness of His people. The Lord's instructions on marriage are no exception. God unites us in marriage and gives us the guidance that we most need to live happy and godly lives. Marriage, as God wills it, provides love, security, and stability to our lives. It is truly the foundation of the family.

Jesus as always, sets us the example: **1 Peter 2:21-23**, ***“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”*** Jesus loved us even when we were unlovely and sinful.

All marriages go through rough spots and challenges. This sermon is designed to speak to those situations.

The Scriptures teach the husband is the head of his wife, and that she is subject to him. In our day, when equality seems to be so important, some think it is unfair that God gave authority to husbands over wives. **But this authority, never gives men the right to abuse or dominate their wives.** Any man who treats the woman he married unkindly is breaking God's law. He is not only disobeying God; he is also deceiving himself. Only a fool believes abusing his wife will benefit him. Wise husbands understand the better he treats his wife, the more their wife will respond with love and respect.

When husbands fail to love their wives, their wives react with disrespect. When husbands sense a lack of respect from their wives, they often act in ways that are unloving. So, these feelings of being disrespected or unloved tear apart marriage. But when husbands show love and wives show respect, the marriage prospers and strengthens. You can make your marriage brighter and better, husbands, if you can learn to demonstrate Christian love to your wife.

If a disrespected husband will love his wife anyway, and if a wife who feels unloved will respect her husband anyway, they can start putting their damaged marriage back together. A wise husband pays attention to his wife. And he is able to see what she needs to be happy. And every woman needs to feel her husband is close to her and cares about her. Some husbands keep their distance from their wives, and their wives feel unloved because of it. Wives need husbands who will open up enough to share their thoughts and feelings. She feels unwanted or unneeded when he closes up and shuts her out of his life. When he keeps his life secret from her, she feels he doesn't love her enough to trust her. Wives need to know their husbands are loyal to their marriage, and that he is not looking elsewhere. She also needs to know he sees her as the most important person in his life (except of course for God). She needs to know that he cherishes and honors her.

The most important thing a husband can do is love his wife. **1 Cor. 13:4-8** says that, ***“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...” Love may start with a warm feeling, *but we must learn how to love our wives; and wives must learn how to love their husbands.*

It is true that some folks are harder to love than others, and love requires a lot of patience and kindness. Love demands that we set “self” aside. I can’t love someone else if I am focused on myself. Love rules out envy, and arrogance and rudeness. It learns to let small things slide and not be irritated all the time. Love bears what marriage demands, it believes and hopes the best in our spouse, and it endures. Love determines to put the best interests of our spouses before our own, regardless of the cost. **Jesus loved the church like that, and He asks husband to love their wives that well as well.**

Now, loving your wife involves taking the time to be close to her and to listen to her. The happiest couples spend time with each other, talking and listening to each other. Husbands and wives should spend a good while each day in meaningful conversation. Turn the TV off, get away from the computer, and talk face to face. A wise husband will take the time to share his life with the woman he loves. He wants her to know about him and he wants to invest his life in her by listening. To fail to pay attention to your wife is to say that you don’t care what she has to say. Such behavior is abusive not loving.

James 1:19-20 says, *“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*

Much of the anger in our homes would go away if people would take the time to listen and to understand the people they love. Listen to your spouse, let her finish her sentences, don't act rashly or hastily. Try to understand her life from her point of view.

Treat you wife with kindness 1 Peter 3:7 says, ***“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.”*** Some men have the awful attitude that because husbands are the head of the wife, that this position of authority gives them the right to dominate or abuse their wives with their power. Any many who treats his wife that way is violating the will of God. Abusive power is a marriage killer. Husbands, treat your wife kindly, tell your wife how important and valuable she is to you. Solomon in Proverbs 31:10-11 says, ***“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.”*** Notice how the wise husband trusts his wife’s judgment and realizes how fortunate he is to have her. ***It is utter foolishness for a man to expect his wife to love him and meet all his needs, while he treats her unkindly.*** *Husbands, love your wives.*

Jesus taught, ***“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”*** (Mt. 7:12). It is interesting, sometimes we treat complete strangers better than our loved one. I wonder what we would think if we saw a video of how we treated our loved ones during the day.

This is why it is good for all of us to once in a while step back and take a long look at how we treat our family members.

Empathy is the ability to see things through the eyes of another and to feel what they are feeling. Some folks never consider just how difficult they make the lives of their loved one.

A wise husband will also be the spiritual leader in his home.

It is spiritually important for couples to spend time together in spiritual matters. And the man should see that His family is going regularly to worship service. There is great value in husband and wives privately praying tother. People who pray together develop a spiritual intimacy and unity that builds their relationship. Christian marriages, where God's laws are obeyed, almost never end in divorce. God's ways are not only the right ways; they are the best ways. And when people truly live out their faith, the way God intended, they find their marriages to be the happiest and most loving. Husbands, do your best to make your home what God would have it to be. Be the spiritual leader in your home. God's way is truly the way of blessing.

In **1 Peter 1:3:1-6** Peter speaks to wives. *“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to*

their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.” Sarah is an ideal woman for Christian wives to follow. As an apostle Peter was inspired of God and as an elder, Peter himself was married. He knew the great blessing of having a good wife.

In 1 Cor. 7:2 we read, *“But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.”* Making your home as God teaches is critical to a happy life. Proverbs 12:4 says, *“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones.”* And in Prov. 18:22 we read, *“He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.”* But in Prov. 19:13 he says, *“and a wife’s quarreling is a continual dripping of rain. House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.”* A man who has a godly wife is doubly blessed – *(she will not be a quarrelsome wife who is irritating just like a dripping drain.)*

Proverbs 31 gives us insight into a virtuous woman, one who any man would be proud to be married to: in verse 10 we read, *“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.”* Then in verses 11 to 28 he describes this virtuous woman. But in verse 30 he gives a warning and then tells the secret of the virtuous woman, *“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.”*

What kind of wife does God wish women to be? Paul says wives should show respect for their husbands. Many women find it hard to respect men. Some have men stereotyped as

crude, juvenile, and unworthy of respect. Masculinity, as a whole, has been under attack in our culture. But humanity couldn't function or reproduce itself without men. Many men work very hard and sacrifice a great deal to provide for their wives and children. Many men spend hours caring for their wives and children every day. Many are sensitive and understanding when they need to be and firm when they need to be. **Men who love their wives and live the Christian life of honesty, integrity and purity will be men worthy of love and respect.** It is sadly true that there are men who live without integrity or purity. They treat their wives harshly. And this is tragic! Wives however, should still respect their husbands.

Why should a wife respect a husband who doesn't deserve it? She should respect her husband because of who he is and who she is. She gives her husband respect because she belongs to the Lord and it is the Lord's will that she does this. And we must do what is right regardless of what others do. Just as I tell husbands to love their wives, even those who have a wife that is hard to love. Likewise, I tell wives to respect their husbands who are hard to respect. Here is how the apostle Paul puts it in **Eph. 5:33**, ***“However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”***

If you want to have a better marriage, **start by looking at yourself.** How are you treating your spouse? Instead of constantly criticizing, start evaluating yourself. You can help your marriage by improving yourself, rather than putting down your mate. Women, do you show respect to your husband? Men do you show a sacrificing love to your wife? Men are you

meeting your wife's needs for love and attention, and women are you honoring your husband by meeting his needs?

We cannot change our spouse by making unreasonable demands, but we can change ourselves. When we change for the better, our spouses will appreciate those changes and if they are Christians, they will want to change as well. Improving our marriages begins with improving our hearts. **Nothing makes a more loving heart, than entering into a loving relationship with God.** *When the love of God is in your heart, you will become more loving and respectful to your family.*

Does the love of God live in you? Are you a committed Christian who loves God and has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? *Loving God means turning away from the sinful and hurtful ways of the world and embracing the loving and righteous ways of Christ.* We call this *repentance, a change of heart that leads to a change of life.* Upon repentance and the *confession of faith,* the *Lord asks you to be baptized into His name,* immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. And in baptism you will be united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection according to **Rom. 6:3-7.** The Lord will wash away your sins (**Acts 22:16**) and He will add you to His church (**Acts 2:47**). And you'll be in God's family. Won't you come to Christ today?