

Husbands, Love Your Wives

by *Mark Nickles*



Valentine's Day comes with expectations for husbands to demonstrate their love and affection for their wives. I would like to suggest Ephesians 5:25-33 as a template for that love, not just for Valentine's Day, but for the New year and beyond. Not only is it instructive in its advice to the often relationally-challenged sex, I believe that it could be at least part of the very inspiration for romantic love.

In verse 25, Paul tells the husbands in the Ephesians' church, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Surely, every husband is familiar with at least one occasion on which their wife swooned from an account of that ultimate expression of love in a novel, movie or television show. Be it fictional or historical, an example of the ultimate sacrifice, borne of such true love touches a woman's heart like almost nothing else.

Granted, that's the extreme example of love. Though we all would undoubtedly give our very lives for our spouse, there are even more practical applications to be found in this passage.

In verses 28-29, we read, "...husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church...".

Now, imagine what would happen if husbands were to begin loving their wives "as their own bodies" in other words, putting them before ourselves. What if the first thoughts in our heads each morning were of their welfare instead of ours? Besides making every effort to provide for all of their needs and even most of their wants, it would undoubtedly mean seeking to make them comfortable in even smaller, yet important ways: opening doors for them; listening when

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they want to talk; taking the kids out once and a while giving mom a day, or maybe just half a day to herself.; or even a simple yet sincere "thank you" for a well-kept house and the many meals provided by the average wife. For me, it would include taking out the trash without being asked. I'm sure each husband could think of at least one equivalent in their own relationship. And, I'm sure we could all agree that the little things sometimes earn the biggest dividends.

Pulling off a successful Valentine's Day is easy. A successful marriage, on the other hand, takes work. With the overwhelming evidence that the traditional family is in trouble in our society, today, I contend that it's up to the husband to take the lead in building a strong marriage, thereby greatly increasing the family's chance of success. After all, the children are watching. What might it mean to the future of the family, the church and even the nation if they grow up seeing Dad loving Mom as he loves himself? I'm not a prophet, but I'd imagine it would also pay great dividends.

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