

## Love In The Family

### Introduction

As we focus on love in the family today, it is important to look at our relationships with those we love so as to find a way to bring the experience and spirit of our faith into our homes. God's love is constraining. No matter what our attitudes or feelings may be, love will always ground us and bring us back in the fold. Many people show their Christianity by the way they, sing, worship or through service in church ministries, but even if we do all these and have no love, Paul says we are nothing.

### **Matthew 22:34-40**

Jesus received great persecution and rejection through religious people than he did anybody else. The Pharisees were trying to trap him in his teaching by asking him what they thought were tricky questions. They thought he was a public nuisance who was getting in the way of their political and religious goals. If they could get him to say something heretical, then they might be able to sway the current public opinion. They got a learned friend to ask him about the greatest commandment. If Jesus chose any of the commandments above the others, they knew they could trap him.

1. The first part of the command Jesus says, is that we love the Lord our God. The Jewish people had both the written law and the oral law that they had to memorize and observe. But with all the descriptions and criteria that bring about righteousness in scripture, the most important thing to God is that we love Him whether we do everything right or not. He is specific on how we are to love Him, with all our heart, our mind and our soul – our all.
2. God does not want us to focus on what is wrong with us or on our weaknesses. The most important truth within all of Christianity is God. That he exists, He is real and He is alive. He wants us to have a personal relationship with him. David was a man after God's heart. He pursued Him with his all.
3. The second part of the command is that we love our neighbor as we love ourselves. – Imagine how our personal relationships would change if we loved the people in our lives as we love ourselves.

God doesn't have to say then thou shall not steal because if you love me as you love yourself, then you won't steal from me, you won't talk ill of me behind my back or slander me. We wouldn't do to others what we would not want done to us.

The reality is, we always want to get more that we can give. We can't therefore, be selfish if we love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

People who love themselves are easier to love and easier to be around than people who don't love themselves. The healthiest people are those who love themselves.

The key to all relationships is the quality of our intrapersonal relationships. The foundation of loving others is loving oneself. The more I love myself, the more I love you. If one is of worth, of value, important to oneself, then he gives to others something of value. If I don't love me, how will I love you or make you love me?

Jesus says, loving God and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves are the greatest priorities. Love is, therefore, a command. God commands us to love meaning it is possible for us to do so. He never commands us to do something unless He gives us the power to accomplish it.

### **Ephesians 5:25-27**

Many of the men in the Ephesian church had been saved out of raw paganism. Many of them had frequented the Temple of Diana, goddess of the Ephesians, where both male and female prostitution were a part of the "worship" ritual (hence, Paul's instructions in [Eph. 5:3-12](#).) Furthermore, many of these men were in marriages that had been arranged by their parents.

The Greek writer, Demosthenes, described the common mentality of pagan men in those days: "We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for the day-to-day needs of the body, but we have wives in order to produce children legitimately and to have a trustworthy guardian of our homes" (quoted by William Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit* [Baker], p. 24; Barclay documents the widespread immorality of pagan Greece and Rome on pp. 24-27).

Against that pagan backdrop, the Christian perspective regarding the sanctity of marriage and the responsibility of the husband to be devoted exclusively to his wife in lifelong, Christlike love was radical and, it's radical in our corrupt culture.

### **Men are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the Church.**

#### **(1) Love is the command for husbands**

##### **a) Authority is not in the command**

The main responsibility of husbands towards their wives is not authority but to continually love them. The husband is primarily responsible to set an atmosphere of love in the home.

##### **b) Material provision is not the command**

When Paul says men should provide for their families, he meant provision of basic needs and not all the stuff the world says we need to be happy.

c) The fact that he commands us to love our wives also means that the excuse, 'I used to love her, but I don't love her anymore' won't work. Love is not merely a feeling or an emotion.

- d) Love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved. Love is taking actions that benefit others.
- e) Love is caring 'just as a man nourishes and cherishes his own flesh as Christ does the church
- f) Love is commitment as implied by the command to love by Christ's covenant love for us
- g) Love shows itself. It is not just words, but also deeds, as seen by Christ's going to the cross for us.

The Word of God is the ideal but our reality is usually different. In reality the society is sick because we won't love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

- Christians are turning against each other
- Hospitals keep patients longer than necessary and doctors fail to admit patients to hospitals all because of money.
- Corruption in public service and county governments, where nepotism and embezzlement of funds meant for infrastructure development is rampant.

### **Marriages**

The Christian marriage is an earthly picture of the relationship between Christ and his bride, the church. The world should look at a Christian marriage and see a distinctive difference in the way that husbands and wives relate to each other. When Christian marriages break up, it sends a false message to the world that Christ does not love his bride with an enduring love. But the reality is that:-

- Many marriages are on the rocks with spouses turning against each other.
- Men have left wives they claim to love, taken on younger ones and thrown away their family lives for reasons that many can't see. They will move heaven and earth, sacrifice wealth and status, live in a hovel with a companion who in social standing is their former wives inferior.
- Spouses are killing each other and their children because they love them so much and would rather see them dead than leave them alone to suffer.
- Increased abuse in society
- A majority of couples in counselling today are in love but can't live together, if they are in love as they claim, why then can't they stand each other?

Considering the above, we can conclude that love alone does not make marriage work. Love alone will not save us from infidelity, abuse, neglect and irresponsibility. Although we claim to love much, there is a disconnect between the love we profess and our relationships.

**So then what is God's Concept of the Family?** King Solomon in Proverbs 24:3-5 gives us an answer. Solomon was obsessed with women and he fell in love with many. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

Solomon does not mention love when he talks about building a successful family, home and household. Love is, therefore, not a guarantee to a successful family though we assume it is the key and sex the glue.

The laws of human behavior are gathered together in the Word of God. To understand why people behave as they do and why you behave as you do, you must understand the laws contained in the Bible.

Knowledge is information, understanding is comprehension of the information while wisdom is applied knowledge. Information is truth and truth is the Word of God. We must get the knowledge, understand it and then apply it into our life situations. Wisdom is supreme, having knowledge and understanding is not enough. We must apply it.

Age does not make us wiser but older. Salvation alone will not sustain our marriage. The Holy Spirit reminds us the things we have learnt. Knowledge gives the Holy Spirit material to reveal to us when we are under pressure.

When God asks us to get information, He doesn't intend for us to get it from other people's opinions and ideals. Some of them are not qualified or equipped with the right information to share.

To build a strong family, home or household, we can't count on love and sex only to hold it together. With age, even energetic men calm down and sex is not appealing any more.

We need knowledge to function in marriage. Stable homes are a result of application of knowledge not an exchange of love. We, therefore need to equip ourselves with the knowledge to fix the situations we find ourselves in. Is wisdom supreme and would its acquisition change the way we live? The answer is yes.

- The family is the oldest institution on earth. **Genesis 2:18 It is not good for man to be alone. So He created woman as a help mate suitable for him.** It is older than the church and the government. Some of us are trying to make the church more important than our spouses and families. Jesus tells husbands to love their wives like He loved His church. He didn't ask them to love His church where one spends too much time with the bride of Christ and losing his home in the process. The church itself is a mess. Only Jesus can love her. Differentiate between family life and spirituality - Marriage is natural, not spiritual. It is an earthly institution ordained by God so that we can minister and meet each other's needs and accomplish God's purpose on earth. Marriage is not church so we can't always bring our church experiences home with the hope that our partners will respond the same way we do. We have our own walk with God, our own personality, our dreams, goals. When at home with our families, we are first husbands or wives, mothers or fathers.
- Men must take up the role of fathers **Genesis 2:24 A man shall leave his father and mother and is joined to his wife and the two are united into one.**
- Understand what our needs are. Man respect, Wife, affection. Man not woman in trousers and woman not man in skirt. (The car needs fuel to function. A man needs sex to function well. The wife's petrol station must

always be open for her husband to fuel whenever need arises otherwise he will fuel at another woman's petrol station).

- Effective communication: **Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen.** Men think logically while women think in circles.
- Different stages of growth in children (our children will come down with all kinds of behavior. Tattoos, nose piercing, seclusion, drug/substance abuse/boyfriend/girlfriend relationships etc. We must realize they are young for a while, we don't have to take away their youth. Let them be. **Colossians 3:21 Fathers do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.**
- Ignorance is generational. We need to learn for our children. **Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.** The more we learn, the more we can teach them and be good role models to them. We get angry at our children for not being what we did not model.
- Manage our finances **Proverbs 31:11 the heart of her husband does safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.**
- Anger management **James 1:19 know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.**
- How to deal with unfaithfulness **Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.** Even in a marriage where romantic love has gone cold, it is possible through obedience to God's Word to turn that marriage relationship around so that it not only honors God, but is also fulfilling to the couple.
- Know when to leave. Not to stay with an abusive man or woman. **Psalms 11:5 The Lord tests the righteous but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.**

We are losing each other in the turns. The turns could be sickness, career changes, mid-life crisis, disappointments in children, job loss, lack of finances, death etc. When we start attacking each other instead of the problem, then we get in trouble.

We must realize we are human and flawed. None of us is perfect. But we don't want to fight at home. We have enough fight out there. We fight to be respected, appreciated, we fight for business opportunities and we fight to get what God has promised us. After I am through with dealing with the harsh world, I want to come home to a peaceful environment. We must learn to compromise. Family life is never about dominance. It is all about negotiation. United we stand, divided we fall and a house divided against itself will not stand!

**In conclusion**, we are the church of Christ. We have a responsibility to be the salt of the earth and a light on a hill. Christ washes us with His blood and His water removing all the blemish on us. A husband washes his wife with the Word by praying for her and over her and by displaying the character of Christ to her and to the family at large. The family thus becomes the panacea of all social evils. If you are a Husband and a father, you will ultimately account for the spiritual well-being of your family.