

## ***HUSBANDS LOVE YOUR WIVES!***

Well, as I am sure all of you know, this coming weekend, Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup>, is Valentine's Day. That doesn't mean much to us as Christians but the world all around us will be making a big deal about showing and giving expressions of love. That can't be a bad thing, and I hope every husband and wife here today have and experience that kind of love. This morning I want to talk about that love.

Love is a strange thing; wonderful but strange. There is really no way to account for the reasons why people begin to love one another. What excites love for one person may have an opposite effect upon somebody else. Love is interesting in that it is unique in the sense that it multiplies by division. The more you give away, the more you have. Love is absolutely invaluable. Its' worth really can't be measured and yet it isn't something that can be bought with money. Amazingly, for most people, it generally comes to us absolutely free of charge!

The story is told about a little boy who was given a memory verse to recite one night at Vacation Bible School. The verse was **1 Corinthians 13:13**: "*So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*" However, when he stepped to front of the auditorium, he became nervous and ended up giving the passage a slightly different wording. He said, "*So now faith, hope, and love abide, but the greatest disease is love!*"

He got it wrong, but really he got it right, didn't he? Love is the greatest disease! It isn't a disease in the sense of something destructive to one's health and well-being, but it is like a disease in the sense that it is something infectious. Love can make you weak as a kitten and overwhelm all your defenses!

If there is one thing the world needs right now, it is a pandemic of love!

Isn't it interesting that in the Bible, you find God reminding husbands and wives to love one another! In **Ephesians 5:25**, Paul says, "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*" He says almost the same thing in **Colossians 3:19**: "*Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*" In the book of Titus, chapter 2, Paul was reminding Titus to teach things that "*become sound doctrine.*" Among those things, he says that the older women are to "*...teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.*"

Does it strike you as kind of odd that God has to remind husbands and wives to love each other? I mean, doesn't that seem like it would be something natural? Why would anyone have to be reminded to do that or admonished about that? Admonitions such as found in Ephesians and Titus might have been more needed in the first century world. Marriages were not usually the result of two people meeting, falling in love, going through a dating period and a courtship, followed by a long engagement. Marriages were often arranged by the parents as part of the way they were looking out for their children and making preparations for them.

That's why Abraham sent his servant back to Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac, and why Isaac's wife sent Jacob away so he would end up marrying one of the Canaanite women as Esau had done. Culturally, marriages were not about love and friendship. They were more like business arrangements. The emphasis was upon practical matters, such as whether or not the husband could provide well for a woman, or whether the woman would likely be able to bear a lot of children. Even so, God knew, as we read in Genesis 2:18, that "*it isn't good for man to be alone.*" The way people are made, generally speaking, it serves their mental and emotional well-being better if they have someone to share life with, to help them through the tough times and be there when we have a reason to rejoice and celebrate. So it made sense for people to learn how to get along with who they ended up marrying, and the basis for a healthy, mutually satisfying relationship is love. So, Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives." And "Wives, love your husbands."

Well, we understand why that made good sense in Biblical times, but what about today. Do husbands and wives really need to be taught to love one another? Well, unfortunately they do; unfortunately, we do. The love relationship between husbands and wives is not always what it ought to be. We need teaching, we need encouragement. We need help in loving that person that most of us freely chose to spend the rest of our lives with.

For most of us that is so true that it needs no proof? We can look around and see all kinds of marriages failing; all kinds of marriage being a far cry what two people imagined it would be that day they said "I do!"

Last Wednesday night, brother Todd Burlie was sharing with us that here in Oklahoma, almost two out of every three marriages end in divorce. This a state where you would think there would be a whole lot more respect for God's plan for marriage than that.

- In 2013, there were 27,275 marriage licenses issued by the state of Oklahoma. In that same year, there were 17,227 divorces granted.
- 363 of those marriage licenses in 2013 were issued here in Kay County, and that same year, Kay County courts granted 217 divorces.

And of course that isn't to say that just because a marriage doesn't end in divorce, it is a good marriage. Just because couples stay married does not mean that they find their relationship all that enjoyable and satisfying. Many marriages are anything but happy, or satisfying. They may not end in divorce, but they are far less than what either of them were anticipating when they became husband and wife.

Of course we are not surprised that the world around us neither knows or cares what God's Word says about these things. Do they care if their lives and actions adorn the doctrine of God our Savior? Probably not! People of the world live by a different rule, they walk to their own beat, but what about us? What about those of us who consider ourselves to be Christians? We who profess to be followers of Christ, who claim we keep His commandments, how are we doing? How is marriage working out where you live? Are our marriage a lot more successful and satisfying? We don't have any good, up-to-date studies on that, but over almost fifty years

of preaching the gospel and working with Christians, I know I've seen an awful lot of pain and sorrow.

That doesn't qualify me to be anyone's judge, I know that, but I do think a lot of that pain and sorrow could have been avoided if husbands had just taken seriously God's admonition to love their wife, and if wives would have just taken seriously God's admonition to love their husband.

I am afraid sometimes we don't give this part of the Christian faith much consideration. We think it is enough that we believe in God, believe in Jesus as the Son of God, and read and study the Bible. We think we are doing well if we make it to worship and maybe Bible study. We try to live decent, moral lives and so we aren't too concerned with whether or not loving our spouses the way we should. Many husband and wives have given up on making their marriages better and happier. They aren't trying to make them more Christian. They have basically given up on that part of the relationship and resigned themselves to making the best of a not-so-great relationship.

This morning, I want to challenge each of you, especially you husbands, to truly love your wives, and you wives, to love your husbands, and I want to challenge you to love them in the way described in God's Word. Let me give you six ways we ought to work on our love:

**For example, the kind of love God wants us to have for our mates is a love that leads us to give up ourselves for the other person.**

- That's what Paul told husbands in **Ephesians 5:25**. Paul said, Christ loved the church and *"gave himself up for it."* It is been said that you can give without loving but you cannot love without giving. I believe that is especially true in marriage. Too many people come to marriage without a willingness and readiness to give up themselves. They may come into marriage continuing a lifelong habit of expecting others to give themselves up for them. If you do that, and especially if both of you are doing that, then it is going to quickly lead to a loveless marriage, and a loveless marriage can be a terrible way to spend the rest of your life!

**Secondly, the kind of love husbands and wives ought to have for each other is a love that causes us to help our mate become all they can be.**

- Continuing to talk about how Christ loved the church, there in **Ephesians 5:27 & 28**, Paul said Christ's desire was to *"...present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."* And then Paul says, *"In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."* In marriage, our goal should really be to help the other person become the greatest wife or husband they are capable of being!

**In the third place, the kind of love that God wants husbands to have for their wives, and wives for their husbands leads us to be respectful of one another.**

- Again, there in **Ephesians 5:33**, Paul says, *“However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”*
- In **1 Peter 3:7**, the apostle Peter writes, *“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.*
- Being respectful of each other means that we don’t disrespect each other. It means we lead respectable lives, both in public and in the privacy of our homes. It means we don’t say or do things that we know hurts or irritates the other person. It’s as if we put our mates up on a pedestal and do everything we can to keep them there.
- Incidentally men, did you notice Peter said if we don’t treat our wives that way, it could hinder our prayers. In other words, God says, if you are not going to listen to me in the way you treat your wife, I am not going to listen to you.

**In the fourth place, husbands and wives, let your love be gentle and kind.**

- In **Colossians 3:18-19**, Paul says, *“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19) Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”*
- Would you ever think of saying to Christ, “Get it yourself!” Would you ever think of saying to Him, “You idiot!” For some reason many people let go of all the gentleness and kindness in their marriage. They speak rudely to one another, and say things that are demeaning, or at best they simply fail to practice the golden rule in the most important relationship they have on earth. They do not treat the other person the way they would like to be treated. Husbands, love your wives, and wives, love your husbands, and let it be a gentle and kind love.

**Number five, the kind of love that the Lord wants husbands and wives to have is exclusive; it is one that finds its pleasures derived in one person and one person only.**

- You want to make a covenant with your eyes that you will find pleasure in just one person; you will not look at anyone else, whether a real person or an image on your television, or computer screen, or magazine.
- In **Proverbs 5**, we find these words beginning in **verse 15**: *“Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. 16) Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? 17) Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. 18) Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, 19) a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. 20) Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? 21) For a man’s ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths. 22) The iniquities*

*of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. 23) He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.”*

- In Matthew 5:28, Jesus made it clear that adultery is a sin that begins in the heart, so as **Proverbs 4:23** says, “*Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.* Don’t let any thought remain on your mind, don’t let any influence get into your heart that doesn’t honor both the Lord and the mate whom God has given you.

**Finally, husbands, love your wives and wives, love your husbands by both of you loving the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength.**

- In other words, make it your decision that you are going to be a committed and holy follower of Christ; that you are going to make the kingdom of God and His righteousness the highest priority in your life.
- Husbands, I do not know of a greater way to earn and keep your wife’s love and respect than by being a godly man. And wives, I do not know of a better way to earn and keep your husband’s love than by being a godly woman.
- Do you know why that is so true? Remember, we are made in the image of God, and unless we are in close communion with Him, we can never be all of the man or woman that we were meant to be.
- And as many of us are learning, the older we get, the more we realize that life is really all about seeking and finding God. When you do that, everything gets blessed in the process. If you really want to love your wife, or your husband, I know of no better way to do that than by doing everything you can to become a spiritual man or woman.

After all, Valentine’s Day is coming, and after all, the greatest disease is love. I hope you get hit with a great case of it, and that you will let God help you make the most of it.

**Invitation**