

Better Way Apostolic Church-Sunday School Marriage Couples Class

Subject: The missing piece in Marriage: Ephesians 5:25

This explains why a Christian should marry a Christ= and not become "unequally yoked together" with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). If the Christian is submitted to Christ he will not try to establish a home that disobeys the Word of God. **Such a home invites civil war from the beginning.** But something else is important. The Christian couple must be careful to submit to Christ's lordship even before they are married. Unless the couple prays together and sincerely seeks God's will in His Word, their marriage begins on a weak foundation. Sins committed before marriage ("We're Christians - we can get away with this!") have a way of causing problems after marriage. Certainly God is able to forgive, but something very precious is lost just the same. Dr. William Culbertson, former president of Moody Bible Institute, used to warn about "the sad consequences of forgiven sins," and engaged Christian couples need to take that warning to heart.

Husbands, love your wives (vv. 25-33). Paul had much more to say to the Christian husbands than to the wives. He set for them a very high standard: Love your wives "even as Christ also loved the church." Paul was lifting married love to the highest level possible, for he saw in the Christian home an illustration of the relationship between Christ and the church. God established marriage for many reasons. For one thing, it meets man's emotional needs. "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Marriage also has a social purpose in the bearing of children to continue the race (Genesis 1:28). Paul indicated a physical purpose for marriage - to help man and woman fulfill the normal desires given them by God (1 Corinthians 7:1-3). But in Ephesians 5, Paul indicated also a spiritual purpose in marriage, as the husband and wife experience with each other the submission and the love of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33).

If the husband makes Christ's love for the church the pattern for loving his wife, then he will love her sacrificially (Ephesians 5:25). Christ gave Himself for the church; so the husband, in love, gives himself for his wife. Jacob so loved Rachel that he sacrificially worked fourteen years to win her. True Christian love "seeketh not her own" (1 Corinthians 13:5)-it is not selfish. If a husband is submitted to Christ and filled with the Spirit, his sacrificial love will willingly pay a price that she might be able to serve Christ in the home and glorify Him.

The husband's love will also be a sanctifying love (Ephesians 5:26-27). The word sanctify means "to set apart." In the marriage ceremony, the husband is set apart to belong to the wife, and the wife is set apart to belong to the husband. Any interference with this God-given arrangement is sin. Today, Christ is cleansing His church through the ministry of His Word (John 15:3; 17:17). The love of the husband for His wife ought to be cleansing her (and him) so that both are becoming more like Christ. Even their physical relationship should be so controlled by God that it becomes a means of spiritual enrichment as well as personal enjoyment (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). The husband is not to "use" his wife for his own pleasure, but rather is to show the kind of love that is mutually rewarding and sanctifying. The marriage experience is one of constant growth when Christ is the Lord of the home. Love always enlarges and enriches, while selfishness does just the opposite.

The Missing Piece

Affection is the expression of love with hugs, kisses, cards, flowers, and the words, "I love you." Affection is not only expressed in marriage, it is also expressed to your children, your parents and, sometimes, your pets. It is our way of telling people that we care for them and that we will be there for them when they need us.

Both men and women need to know they are loved. But women seem to need affection, the expression of love, more often than men. That's why men usually don't show it as often as women need. But any man can learn to do it as often as his wife wants him to. In *His Needs, Her Needs*, I write about the importance of creating an environment of affection, where a wife is reminded continuously that she is loved and cared for.

Sex, on the other hand, is an entirely different need than affection. While it also should be met in marriage, sex and affection should not be confused. Many men, particularly those who do not have much of a need for affection, use affection as an opportunity for sex. They show affection whenever they make love, but not at other times. This causes their wives to react with resentment, the way you have reacted in your letter to me. Most women feel used when their husbands are affectionate only when they want sex.

Affection is something you can do with your parents or children as well as your spouse. It is not sex. While you may also be affectionate when you make love, sex should be a special event in an environment of affection.

Whenever I counsel a man who is not very affectionate, I give him a list of things to do every day. (I usually make up the list with his wife who tells me what to include.) He must do each of them and check them off the list as he does it. Here is a general example.

1. Hug and kiss your wife and tell her you love her every morning while you're still in bed. Rub her back for a few minutes before you get up.
2. Tell her that you love her while you are having breakfast together.
3. Kiss her and tell her you love her before you leave for work.
4. Call her during the day to ask how she is doing and that you love her.
5. After work, call her before you leave to tell her when you will be home, and tell her you love her.
6. Buy her flowers on the way home at least once a week, with a card that tells her you love her.
7. When you arrive home from work, give her a big hug and kiss and spend a few minutes talking to her about how her day went. Don't do anything else before you have given her your undivided attention.
8. Tell her that you love her as you are having dinner together.
9. Help her clear off the table and wash and dry the dishes with her, giving her a hug and kiss at least once, and tell her that you love her.
10. Hug and kiss her and tell her you love her in bed before you both go to sleep.