

Husband, This Is What It Looks Like to Love Your Wife as Jesus Does

When Percy Sledge or Michael Bolton begin to sing “When a Man Loves a Woman,” the ladies swoon and scream. And if you as a husband love your wife that way, she’s likely to respond in a similar fashion.

That song, still heard 50 years after it first came out, speaks to something deep in the hearts of human beings, something God put there, something that differentiates a successful marriage from an unsuccessful one. Regardless of how hard the enemy tries to distort and complicate it, loving your woman well will keep her heart close to yours and make your relationship intimate and strong. That’s something of what it means to love your wife like Christ.

Let’s get the objections out of the way right now. Life is complicated, and human beings are broken. God has given your wife free will also, and she has the option to refuse your love. Women can cause men enormous pain (the song implies that too), and your needs are important. I have some very strong things to say to women who behave badly toward their husbands.

But as a man God has gifted you with the responsibility and the power to be as Christ to your wife. Nothing happens—spiritually, emotionally or sexually—until you step up. It’s vulnerable, scary and perhaps overwhelming, but that’s what God has called you to do.

And you can do it.

Cherish Your Wife

Paul said, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also

loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

I think the best word to describe this kind of love is "cherish."

What do you do when you cherish something? For a moment think of it in terms other than your wife. What is super-important to you? What keeps you excited, passionate and interested? Perhaps it's fishing, baseball, golf, computer programming, classic cars, the stock market or music. How would someone else know of your interest?

It would actually be quite easy to tell what you cherish. You study everything about your passion, seek to improve your skill in it and invest significant amounts of time, money and energy. You say no to other seemingly good things in order to have more to invest. You protect and care for your golf clubs, your fishing gear, or your musical instrument – perhaps even at the expense of aspects of your personal comfort and well-being.

That's how you cherish your wife. You study her, seek to understand her, notice what makes her happy, sad, invigorated or depleted. You constantly and proactively strive to win her heart and love her even better than before, and invest significant amounts of time, money and energy in your relationship. You say no to things that would threaten your connection with her. You protect and care for her, treating her as the most valuable and precious thing in your life—even when doing so costs more than you thought you had to give.

In short, you give yourself for her just as Christ gave Himself for us.

A marriage and family therapist told me once that she has never met a woman who would not willingly and gratefully submit to a man who truly loves her this unselfishly and completely. Your wife may be an exception, but I doubt it.

What “Cherishing” Looks Like

Unless someone handcuffed you and dragged you to the chapel, you won your wife’s heart once. If your connection has weakened, perhaps it’s time to win her heart all over again. Yes, there are things your wife is supposed to do, but we’re talking about you right now. Just step up and do it. Get creative if you have to.

Knowing your wife’s love language helps. So does spending some time thoughtfully imagining things from her perspective. If you’ve been less than the ideal husband in some ways, there’s no time like the present to pick up the challenge.

I felt so treasured, loved and cherished by my husband, and that’s one of the big things I miss now that he’s passed away. Each couple has their unique ways of relating, but these are a few possible ways that may tell your wife how important she is to you.

- Take her hand, or put your arm around her, and pray for her. Do it even if you feel awkward. It’s OK if your words are few and hesitant. Just bring her before the Lord, and ask Him to bless her.
- Notice something she cares about and ask her more about it. See what matters in her world and take a step into her world with her. Show by your attention that “what matters to you matters to me.”
- See where she is struggling and offer your support. That may be in practical matters such as household chores. It may be with her internal struggles such as self-esteem or worry. You may not be able to fix it, but be there, tackling the issue together.
- Listen to her with your undivided attention. Staying there and listening when your wife is emotional may feel uncomfortable, but it may be the best gift you can give. Again, don’t worry about fixing it. She needs you to hear her.

- Speak well of her to others. No underhanded compliments or snide remarks. Let her hear you saying how proud you are to have her as your wife – and why.

Accept the Challenge

This has been me, a woman, giving you as a husband some insight on how to have the kind of relationship with your wife that makes you proud, makes her display her beauty and makes God smile. It may sound difficult, but I believe you can do this. It's not a guarantee, but loving your wife this way will open the possibility to the kind of adventurous and satisfying marriage you want.

God has placed within you the capability, desire and responsibility to be this kind of husband to your wife. You have what it takes. Will you accept the challenge?

"When a man loves a woman," all kinds of good things happen.

Question: As a husband, how well are you loving your wife like Christ? What is the most challenging aspect of doing so? Leave a comment below! {eo}

Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley is both a board-certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained Doctor of Ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the Fully Alive kind of life Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .

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