

This 43-Year-Old Revelation Completely Revolutionized My Marriage

Forty-five years ago, I thought I had marriage all figured out. I even preached on marriage while still single. I will never forget how the older pastor chuckled at me, a young single preacher, exhorting his congregation about marriage. "You will see things differently once you are married," he assured me with a smile.

As far as I was concerned, it was simple. As the "head," I would make all final decisions and my wife would obediently follow wherever I chose to go.

Well, in 1976, I married Susan, who had left a successful teaching career in a community college to follow God's call. About six months into our marriage, my view of marriage was challenged as we had a disagreement, and neither was willing to budge. I then went to prayer asking God to help her understand that she must submit to my God-ordained authority.

As I prayed in this manner, Paul's exhortation for husbands to love their wives "as Christ loved the church" suddenly stood before me with the words "and gave Himself for her" highlighted in bold letters (Eph. 5:25). I then heard the Holy Spirit say, "The problem is that you are not willing to let go of yourself."

When I heard this message from the Lord, I knew that my "I" or ego was standing in the way of resolution and peace. There had to be a little less (probably a whole lot less) of me in that situation and in the relationship in general. As I obeyed the Lord and let go of myself in that situation, it proved to be a life-changing experience.

I began to learn the truth of what Jesus said in Mark 8:35, "For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever would lose his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it." I began to realize that this call to lose one's life was not just for church and ministry, but also for marriage.

This did not mean that I was to be a doormat for other people, but that I could no longer live my life—my Christian life—from self-serving motives. I was learning what true Christianity, and Christian marriage, is all about. I was learning what it means to *agape* another, for *agape* is the word Paul used in his exhortations to husbands.

Here Is Love

Yes, in Ephesians 5:25, Paul calls on husbands to "Love your wives as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." The revolutionary character of Paul's exhortation is made evident by the fact that the Greek word that is translated "love" in this passage is *agape*.

There are two Greek words in the New Testament that are translated as love: *phileo* and *agape*. *Phileo* is a love between family or friends, and it means "to like someone or feel affection for someone." *Eros* is found in the Old Testament and is the word for erotic or sexual love. *Agape*, however, is love supreme and is not based on a feeling.

Agape is the kind of love that will sacrifice its own self-interests for the sake of another. It is a selfless love that will, if necessary, make the ultimate sacrifice and lay down its life for another. Paul gives husbands a model for this sort of love by pointing to Christ who loved (*agape*) the church and "gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25b).

Agape has been called the "God-kind of love" because it is the word that is used by biblical writers when speaking of God's love for humanity and for His Son. It is the word that is used when speaking of Christ's love for the Father and His love for

His disciples. *Agape* is also the kind of love that Jesus said would be the distinguishing mark of His followers.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love (*agapaō*) one another; as I have loved (*agapaō*) you, that you also love (*agapaō*) one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples if you have love (*agapē*) for one another” (John 13:34-35, NKJV).

Agape Lets Go of Power

The well-known sociologist Willard Waller, discovered that there seems to be an inverse relationship between love and power. He noted that in interpersonal relationships as love increases, power decreases; and as power decreases, love increases. He coined the term “principle of least interest” to describe the phenomenon, revealed by his studies, that power lies in the hands of the person who cares the least about the relationship (Hyatt, *Who's the Boss?*, 8).

For example, a couple goes to receive counseling concerning their marriage that is on the rocks. The counselor can immediately tell which one loves the least and is least committed to the relationship. It is the one in the power seat. It is the one making the demands. The one who truly loves has let go of power and is willing to make any sacrifice to see the marriage survive.

This gives understanding to the fact that when the time came for God to demonstrate His love for humanity, He let go of power. In Philippians 5:6-8 (TLB), Paul says, “Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross.”

The cross is God's ultimate demonstration of love to mankind, and there is nothing more powerless than a man nailed to a

Roman cross, dying in public to the hisses and jeers of his detractors. This was love supreme, and men, this is the model of love that Paul commands us to exercise toward our wives. "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25, MEV).

The Answer for AWOL Fathers and Husbands

Most babies born in America today are born into a home where the father is absent. This, in turn, is creating deep societal problems for studies show that children growing up in a single-parent home are far more likely to live in poverty, drop out of school, join a gang, get involved with drugs or be in trouble with the law.

The issue is not a lack of power, but a lack of *agape* love, which is being manifested in selfishness and irresponsibility. Sadly, young people today are exposed almost exclusively to an erotic, sexual sort of love in movies and the media. Such love is self-serving. It may bring some temporary pleasure, but it will never build a home. It may produce babies, but it will never make a man or a father.

Only *agape* can make a man and a father. So I say to the young man who has fathered a child, be man enough to walk in *agape* love. Take responsibility. Get a job. Marry the baby's mother. Humble yourself and admit your need. Ask her to help you be a better husband and a better father. Ask God for His help. That's real leadership. That's what it means to walk in love.

Agape Brings Harmony and Mutuality

Walking in *agape* means we will help our wives maximize their gifts and fulfill their Divine destinies without neglecting our own. The good news is that such a selfless approach brings harmony and mutuality into the Christian marriage. Commenting on this reality, Dr. Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen write:

The concept of sacrificial self-giving so that a spouse can

achieve full potential has been the role that society has traditionally given to the wife. Here Paul gives it to the husband. Of course, giving oneself sacrificially for the other is an excellent example of the submission wives and husbands are to have toward one another (Hyatt, Who's the Boss?, 40-41).

It Works

I can personally testify that making a commitment to walk in *agape* brings great benefits and blessings into the marriage relationship. After 43 years of marriage (to the same woman), I have never felt more confident, more at peace and more settled in my life and marriage. {eoa}

*This article is derived from **Dr. Eddie Hyatt's** latest book, **Who's the Boss?**, available from Amazon in both Kindle and paperback. His website is . His wife, Dr. Susan Hyatt, has founded the International Christian Women's Hall of Fame in Grapevine, Texas. The website is .*