

Being Christ to Your Wife

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It is a very bitter thing for a husband to hear his wife speaking harshly to him. We can feel angry and resentful when we feel we are being dishonoured and underappreciated. You may begin to wonder, 'How much of this can I take?' How should we act in these fall-outs and, in some cases, extreme confrontations?

Christ's Response to His Abusers

While presenting on the role of the husband in our recent Marriage Enrichment course, it dawned on me how much abuse Christ had to endure on the cross. He endured insults, slander and massive verbal and physical abuse. Think about how much he had to forgive while enduring this extensive abuse – and then think about Who He was! The Man above all men, the only true God, the Father above all fathers, the Husband above all husbands. Well, God tells us, '*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*' (Eph 5:25)

Christ loved His bride while she hated and insulted Him.

How much did He have to love, how much did He have to forgive while enduring this severe disrespect? We represent Jesus in our marriages. We are asked to be like Him to our wives. Of course, this is a human impossibility! I would suggest that we have not put up with half as much as Christ had to put up with. Or, should we say, we have not had to endure anything like Christ had to endure with His 'bride-in-the-making' while being crucified by her. Christ loved His bride while she hated and insulted Him. For those of you who are Afrikaans speaking, 'Hy het verskriklik deurgeloop' (He suffered terribly).

Never 'Enough'

Sorry guys, but I think we have to up our game. If Christ tells us to love our enemies (Matt 5:44), how much more should we not only put up with our wives verbal assault etc. but love them in it and through it, in order to bring them to the wholeness that God has for them. They are our covenant

partners. In a covenant, we don't only give 50 percent – we are supposed to give 100 percent.

Jesus never reaches His 'enough'. He even let His bride kill Him because of her sinfulness.

I dare to say that when we have said, 'Enough is enough!', it is by no means enough when compared to Christ's 'enough'. Jesus never reaches His 'enough'. He even let His bride kill Him because of her sinfulness.

The Covenantal Love Challenge

So we are challenged to readjust our heart muscles of love, realign our attitudes, and increase our forgiveness and patience. We are challenged to keep on keeping on in loving our wives into their godly wholeness. This is what Christ did when He was hanging on the cross for our restoration and our wholeness. (Eph 5:26-27)

Live Out The Word

In Ephesians 5:26 it says that Christ *'cleansed her by the washing of water with the word'*. For us men, the largest part of this washing is living out the words in 1 Cor 13 and Gal 5:22. This would wash our wives far better than only teaching her the word of God. I dare say that we say too much and do too little. Sorry, but please know that I do stand with you in missing the mark in this sometimes. So we're in this together – one brother helping another brother.

Live By The Spirit

I mentioned the human impossibility of what God expects of us husbands. So how are we to do this human impossibility of loving and turning the other cheek and forgiving as Christ forgives? The part in Ephesians 5 where it speaks of wives and husbands is preceded by the verses discussing our ability to live by the Spirit's power. (Eph 5:15-20)

Spend Time with Your Role Model

Paul gave us the answer in the how to do the impossible before He challenges us as husbands and wives to be the humanly impossible. The measure to which we draw near to Jesus, in a loving relationship with our Saviour, older Brother, Lord and Master, is the measure to which the impossibilities of being a really Christ-like husband becomes more probable and possible.

When I spend time with Christ in this way, suddenly my heart starts to soften. Suddenly I see my selfishness and self-justification. Suddenly I am convicted of my stubbornness and see more clearly my role as leader of my family. When I rub shoulders with the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, I become more like Him.