

'Til Death Us Do Part

27 October 2022



An elderly farmer once said to me, *"Young man, no one may pick a fight with your wife. You need to defend her, because you are called to be her protector, amongst many other things. She needs to know she can call on your assistance at a moment's notice"*.

The Example of Christ and the Church

Scripture can be categorised into various themes, but one of the themes that stands out most is that God created us for His pleasure, His purposes and His glory (Ephesians 1:5 & 9; Philippians 2:13; Revelations 4:11; Colossians 1:16 and Isaiah 43:7).

In the Old Testament, God refers to the Israelites as His wife, *"In that day," declares the Lord, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.'" (Hosea 2:16, NIV)*. He also continually had to discipline Israel for their spiritual adultery, where they frequently fell and worshipped demon gods (Jeremiah 3:18). Yet, through it all, God was always faithful and caring, providing and protecting His wife, the Israelites, while they, in turn, were adulterous and wayward.

In the New Testament, Christ paid the ultimate price by dying on the cross for our sins. He did not sin and did not need to die for anything He did wrong (2 Corinthians 5:21), but He showed the absolute sacrifice of love for His future wife, the church, those who would one day put their faith in the fruit of His death on the cross.

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Christ gave His all for us: His church, His children and His future bride (Matthew 8:17; John 10:11). His devotion and loyalty are shown by His words and deeds. In return, He asks us to do the same – to return our devotion for His devotion; our unconditional devoted love for His unconditional devoted love; His absolute loyalty for our loyalty, and so on (Matthew 16:24-26; John 3:15-19;

Romans 8:3-4).

Through Paul, Peter and John's letters written to the early church (God's young future bride), God continually had to remind them of His love and devotion and, in the same breath, ask them to return that devotion to Him. Many believers were reprimanded for sinning by running after the practices of the pagan world around them, and once again, God called them to return to the Lover of their beings and souls (Ephesians 5:1-5; 2 Peter 3:14-16; 1 John 3).

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The Relationship of Husband and Wife

In Ephesians 5:21-33, a husband and wife's relationship is compared to Christ's relationship with His church. With the same expected devotion and love spoken of previously between Jesus and His bride.

The sanctity, devotion and respect in marriage is based on these thousands of years of interaction, and Biblical principles lived out by God and, to a far lesser extent, lived out by the Israelites and the church.

The Husband as Christ

The husband represents Christ, who, through His death on the cross, proved that He placed His future wife's reconciliation and restoration to Him above His own breath. Her interests above His own. So too, husbands need to do the same for their wives. In their own strength, this is not plausible, but in the strength of the Lord and through fellowship and relationship with Him, it is very plausible.

The Wife as the Church

Wives are compared to the church, which is Christ's future wife. They are to do for their husband as the church is expected to do for Christ and to show their devotion and love for Christ, their future husband. Once again, this kind of devotion is not possible outside of a deep endearing relationship with Jesus, her Lover and Saviour of her being.

A very important note is that our devotion to our spouse is ALWAYS secondary to our devotion to our eternal Husband and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

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An Illustration

In closing, I heard this amazing story of lifelong marital love as my friend shared how much his grandparents loved each other. They had been married for 68 years, and in their last few months on earth, the grandfather was bedridden. During this time, his wife would not leave his bedside, even though she was in a wheelchair. She held his hand all day long, every day, until he breathed

his last. A few months later, she too passed away, not being able to live without her husband of so many years. They both loved the Lord, but her longing for Christ and her lifelong covenant partner was too much to bear.

Let us as married couples espouse to this kind of love for our earthly lifelong partner, knowing and committing to continually placing their interests above our own – loving one other, especially when it is undeserved and unwarranted.