

Ephesians 5:25–31 | “A Husband’s Responsibility”
Preached on November 9, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 5:25–31 today, as we will be looking at the husband’s responsibility in marriage. *[pause]*

Last week was all about the wife’s responsibility, and now husbands: it’s your turn. *[pauseeee]*

Let me say upfront: I am not a perfect husband. *[pause]*

I do not show love to my wife as much as I should, and I fail often, so I need this teaching just as much as every other husband in this room. *[pause]*

So know that I preach this, not as someone who has arrived, but as one of you, who needs this daily.

So let’s look at what God’s Word says together this morning. *[READ 25–31]*

It is no secret that husbands are criticized and downplayed in our culture. *[pauseeee]*

Now on the one hand, that may be because there *have been* a lot of bad husbands. *[pause]*

I’m sure we all could recount bad examples of husbands who cheated on their wives, abandoned their family, or put them through horrific abuse or neglect. *[pause]*

Those examples are real, and we must not act like they don’t happen or overlook the hurt they have caused. *[pauseeee]*

These bad examples of husbands are also often depicted in TV and movies. *[pause]*

You see a husband portrayed as a bumbling fool, who has no idea what’s going on.

Then you have husbands who are pictured as neglectful and absent, or abusive and controlling. *[pausee]*

What’s interesting is that the husbands portrayed in this way are shown to be with a wife who is smart and competent.

And so the message is clear in our media: Husbands are hindrances to the family’s joy and health or weighing them down in some way. *[pause]*

The implication is that husbands are useless and just get in the way, so why do we need them? *[pauseeee]*

Amidst all of these negative examples of husbands, we need a shining, good example of what a husband *ought to be*. *[pause]*

If we keep putting husbands down, they will drop even further than our low expectations.

But if they are shown the high expectation and commandment of the Lord, then they can rise up to it. *[pausee]*

That's what Paul does here—he lays out the lofty expectations and requirements of Christian husbands and calls them up to it. *[pause]*

So husbands: Will you sink down to what culture says that you are, or will you rise up to be a man of God? *[pauseeee]*

As we consider this passage, the main point is crystal clear...

Husbands, love your wives!

What's interesting is that Paul just told wives that the husband is the head, and so he's the leader in the marriage. *[pause]*

You would expect Paul's instruction to husbands to be: "Husbands, rule your wives," but it's not—it's to love their wives. *[pause]*

So he doesn't say, "Boss her around, guys!"

He doesn't say, "Make her serve you hand and foot."

Rather, Paul is showing husbands that, yes, you are the leader, but this is how you are to lead her: with love. *[pauseeeee]*

This is no one-time act, but a continual, life-long duty...

You are to love her every single day, through every single hardship, and amidst every single sin, flaw, or weakness she may have. *[pausee]*

You do not demand that she earn your favor before you love her.

You do not drop your responsibility, if she is not upholding hers. *[pauseeee]*

Husbands, stop looking to where you think that your wife has failed, and consider how unloving you have been to her. *[pauseeee]*

Paul's instruction here for husbands to love their wives was actually counter-cultural in his day. *[pause]*

One commentary said that, "Ancient household codes never list love as a husband's duty; such codes told husbands only to make their wives submit."¹ *[pausee]*

¹ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Eph 5:25.

So for Christian men in Paul's day, God was calling them to live differently than the surrounding world. *[pause]*

You see, the Biblical teaching on the responsibility of husbands is not instituting some oppressive, abusive, or controlling situation...

Our culture will try to portray it that way, but to say that is to directly ignore or misunderstand what Paul is saying...

Paul was calling men *out* of that way of life, and to a way of sacrificial love for their wives. *[pauseeee]*

That's key: This is *sacrificial* love that Paul is calling husbands to, not only because that's what true love is, but also, because that's what Christ showed.

And that's where Paul goes next in helping husbands to see how they are to love.

They are to...

I. Love her like Christ. (25–27)

Men, we often want to do things *well*. *[pause]*

We put time and thought into making sure that that home project turns out perfect, and we get upset if we see a mistake that we made, even if no one else notices it. *[pause]*

We take pride in a job well done at the workplace, and seek to improve. *[pauseee]*

Now in order to do a good job, one thing that we do is we look at perfect examples of what we are to do, so that we can follow them. *[pause]*

Well husbands, for your marriage, you have a perfect example and model to look to—Jesus Christ! *[pause]*

Paul says in verse 25, “Husbands, love your wives, *as* Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” *[pauseee]*

Talk about a high ideal to look up to and live up to—you couldn't get higher if you tried! *[pauseeee]*

The Bible gives no low expectation or example for husbands, but lifts their eyes upward to Christ on the Cross. *[pause]*

As we look up, we see what we are to do in relation to our wife...

As Christ loved and gave himself up for the church, so husbands ought to love their wife *like that*. *[pauseeeee]*

Do you realize what God is calling husbands to here because it is absolutely stunning. [pause]

He's telling husbands to love their wife so much that they are willing to *die* for her. [pauseeee]

How much more loving can you get?

This is no oppressive, tyrannical leadership—this is servant-minded, sacrificial leadership that gives up one's self for another. [pauseeeee]

Now some of you husbands will say, "I would certainly take a bullet for my wife!" and that's great, but does that sacrificial love show up in the small, mundane moments of life, too? [pauseeee]

This kind of Christ-like love doesn't *just* show up in an extreme life-and-death situation, but it shows up in the daily grind of life. [pause]

This love shows up when you are tired after a long day at work.

It shows up even when your wife isn't being the most pleasant.

It shows up in servant-minded sacrifices that put your wife's needs first. [pauseeee]

Husbands are to love like Christ, who gave himself up for the church.

And He did this so that we, who were sinners, could be forgiven, given eternal life, and made to be His people. [pause]

He, the perfect, sinless sacrifice, died for us, who couldn't save ourselves.

And in that act, we see the *kind* of love that we are to have for our wives. [pauseeeee]

First, we see that Christ's love for the church was an *active and initiating love*. [pause]

Christ didn't sit back, fold His arms, and say, "I'm not doing anything until they do something first!"

No, when we were still in our sin, and unable to save ourselves, Christ died for us.² [pause]

He took not only the *first* step forward, but *all of the steps* necessary to secure our redemption and reconcile us to God. [pauseeeee]

Husbands, your love for your wife should be seen in active ways.

Your wife should see *evidence* of your love. [pause]

She should be able to see your love in action, and say, "Wow, he really loves me!" [pauseeeee]

² A reference to Romans 5:8.

Many husbands say, “Well, she knows that I love her,” but do you show it in your actions?
[pause]

Do you serve her by doing things for her around the house?

Do you hug her just because you love her? [pause]

Do you see when she’s struggling, step in and say, “Hey, what’s going on? How can I help?”
[pauseeee]

As I mentioned earlier, Jesus’ love was initiating love, so that means that husbands should be the prime initiator in the relationship. [pause]

When he sees something that needs to be done, he should do it, and not expect his wife to do it.
[pause]

When there’s an argument, the husband should initiate the forgiveness and reconciliation process. [pause]

When the marriage is not in a good place, the husband should be the one who steps up and seeks a way for them to get to a better, healthier place. [pauseeee]

I’ve seen many examples of a wife *begging* her husband to seek marital counseling together, but the husband refuses. [pause]

Are you willing to set aside your pride, and seek spiritual help and guidance for the sake of your marriage? [pauseeee]

Husbands, is your love active and initiating, or are you passive, letting her take the lead, while you are content to sit back and watch? [pauseeee]

Not only is Jesus’ love for the church active and initiating, but it’s a *sacrificial love*. [pause]

Jesus gave over his body to be killed, so that the church could be redeemed.

Likewise, a husband should serve his wife, sacrificing his wants for her. [pauseeee]

Instead of investing all his spare time in a hobby, he should be willing to sacrifice it at times to spend more time with her. [pause]

When she doesn’t feel well, he willingly steps up and does more to make sure the home is functioning. [pause]

When she is going through something, he willingly turns off the TV and talks to her about it.
[pauseeee]

Husbands, love your wife sacrificially, even if what you do goes unnoticed.

And do it, not expecting anything in return, but out of genuine love. *[pauseeee]*

In explaining Christ's love for the church, Paul goes on to talk about more.

He tells us that Christ gave himself up for the church in order to do something...

He died, verses 26 and 27 say, "that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word..."

So that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." *[pauseeeee]*

For this to make sense, you need to remember our status *before* Christ. *[pause]*

We were sinful, unclean before the Lord, and so separated from Him. *[pause]*

How could we ever be holy and clean and have a reconciled relationship with Him? That's where Christ's death comes in...

He died for us in order to make us righteous in God's sight. *[pause]*

His blood cleansed our sinful account before God, as we believed the gospel, which told us of Christ's work for us. *[pause]*

He did all of this, so that we could be reckoned 'holy' before God.

And this is the only way that we can have a close, right relationship with the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

He did the work for us, cleansing us and setting us apart as holy.

And even now He works in us to sanctify us, so that someday the church will stand before Him without spot or wrinkle. *[pauseee]*

These are all things that Christ did *for us*.

He became dirty, bloodied, tortured, and torn down so that His bride could be radiantly clean! *[pauseeeee]*

In Jesus' relationship with the church, we see that He loves His bride in a way that pursues her ultimate good. *[pause]*

He died for and cares for the church, so that the church will be beautifully holy.

For the church will someday be presented "in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." *[pause]*

So also, a husband loves his wife in a way that seeks her eternal good, and that means that you want to see her grow in her faith and find joy in Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Husbands, like Christ, it's by our sacrificial love that we can help our wives grow and become more holy. *[pause]*

As you sacrificially love her, she's led to grow in her faith.

As she sees your servant-mindedness, she's led to serve others more, too. *[pause]*

Husbands, are you willing to do anything for your wife's spiritual good? *[pause]*

Sadly, many husbands are being dragged along to church by their wife, or they don't even go at all. *[pause]*

They are being dragged along in their spiritual walk by their godly wife, who wants him to step up and be a man of God.

That is not the way it ought to be, men! *[pause]*

We are to be leading our wife and family to follow Christ and grow in Him.

This means leading your family to regular church attendance, encouraging them to read the Bible and pray, joining them in serving others, and many more ways. *[pause]*

One of our greatest pursuits and joys as husbands should be to see our wives become more and more radiantly holy.

This means that you cannot squash her gifts, thoughts, and opinions. *[pause]*

Christ gives the church what it needs to thrive—He doesn't squelch us under a firm, tyrant hand.

So a good, loving husband helps his wife to flourish and thrive! *[pause]*

Encourage her in using her gifts, listen intently to her thoughts, and strongly consider her opinions.

Do what you need to do, in order for her to grow and thrive spiritually. *[pause]*

If that means that you watch the kids for a while, so that she can take time to read the Bible, then do it. *[pause]*

If that means that you sacrifice time and money for her to attend a woman's retreat, then great.

Think about your wife's relationship with Christ, and not just your own. *[pause]*

A husband who loves like Christ is a husband who lives in such a way that communicates to his wife...

"I want you to have joy, I want you to be radiant, I want you to flourish, I want your eternal good." *[pause]*

Isn't it an incredible honor to play such a vital role in your wife's life? *[pause]*

How much *misuse* of the husband's responsibility would lessen if this was understood and lived out! *[pauseeee]*

Husbands, love your wife like Christ, but secondly...

II. Love her like your own body. (28–31)

In verse 29, Paul goes on to talk about the human tendency to care for your own body. *[pause]*

We eat food in order to be sustained for another day, we get sleep to feel replenished, and we take showers to feel clean and put together.

But why do we do this? Because it's *our* body, so we want to care for it. *[pauseeee]*

We'll listen to what Paul says in verse 28, "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." *[pauseeee]*

In order for this to make sense, you need to be grounded in the knowledge that marriage is a one-flesh union. *[pause]*

When a man and a woman come together to be married, they actually become one new entity.

They are no longer solely two individuals, but they are joined together as one in marriage. *[pause]*

This means that inherent to marriage is *unity*. *[pause]*

A husband and wife come together and unite physically, but they are also to be united emotionally, intellectually, financially, and spiritually. *[pause]*

That means that when someone gets married, it's no longer about "me" but about "us." *[pause]*

It's no longer *my* money, but *our* money.

It's no longer *my* body, but *our* body.

It's no longer *my* time, but *our* time. *[pauseeee]*

In order for your marriage to flourish, you must have this foundational truth in your mind—you are now 'one' with your spouse. *[pause]*

Paul's point is this—you take care of your physical body, don't you?

We'll remember that your wife is one flesh with you, and so care for her, knowing that she's a part of you! *[pauseeee]*

You don't disregard your body, so why would you disregard your wife, who is a part of you in that one-flesh union? *[pauseeee]*

Husbands, keep going back to the truth that your wife is one-flesh with you. *[pause]*

Treat her like she's a part of you, for she is!

For if someone hurt your wife, wouldn't it feel like they just hurt you? Of course! *[pause]*

So also, in all of life, consider her a part of you. *[pause]*

If she struggles, consider it as if you were struggling. *[pause]*

If she needs something, consider it as if you were in need.

Instead of focusing on your own needs and wants alone, think about her needs and wants, too. *[pauseee]*

Before you sit down on the recliner, think about what she would desire. *[pauseeee]*

We are told that this is what Christ does for the church, His body.

He nourishes and cherishes the church because He considers us one with Him, so also, nourish and cherish your wife. *[pauseeee]*

To 'nourish' is to provide her with what she needs. *[pauseeee]*

Many guys are great at providing financially for their wives, but they aren't the best at providing emotionally or spiritually. *[pause]*

They don't know what to do when she's sad and needs comfort.

They don't know how to lead her spiritually, and help her thrive in that area, but see that as your responsibility. *[pauseeee]*

Not only are husbands to nourish their wives, but they are to cherish them, too. *[pause]*

To 'cherish' here is literally to warm up, which is a picture of someone warming up someone else in care and comfort.

So to cherish your wife means you are to provide tender care for her. *[pauseeee]*

Tenderly care for her when she's sad.

Tenderly care for her when she's struggling.

Tenderly care for her by using kind and loving tones when you talk to her. *[pause]*

Men can sometimes come across as uncaring and gruff, but we should instead show masculine, tender care. *[pauseeee]*

Remember that marriage is not to be a battleground, but a place of unity and harmony—you are in this together. *[pause]*

Do you treat your wife like you are one? Or is it more about *your* opinions, wants, and desires? *[pause]*

Do you willingly and joyfully listen and consider her thoughts on a decision? *[pauseeeee]*

Imagine the difference in how husbands treated their wives, if they remembered this one-flesh reality! *[pause]*

How could a husband abuse his wife, knowing she's a part of him? *[pause]*

How could a husband ignore his wife's thoughts, knowing she's one with him? *[pause]*

How could he neglect her, when it's (in a way) neglecting himself, and so hurting himself? *[pauseeeeeee]*

Husbands, realize this—when your wife thrives emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, and in every other way, you thrive, too.

And guess what? The opposite is true, too...

If she is pushed down and treated with contempt, then you are hurting her, yourself, and your marriage. *[pauseeeeeee]*

Husbands, love your wife. *[pause]*

Love her like Christ does the church, and love her like your own body.

These are our instructions, and Christ is our model to follow—so put your life into the mold of Christ and shape it accordingly! *[pauseeee]*

Remember how much Christ loves the church, which we are a part of. *[pause]*

He loved us so much that He gave His life for us, though we didn't deserve it.

But he didn't stop there, for He nourishes and cherishes us, so that we thrive in Him, becoming more and more radiantly holy. *[pauseeeee]*

He truly loves us with deep, lasting, and tender care—do you love your wife like that? *[pause]*

Does she know and feel loved, or does she feel neglected and disregarded? *[pause]*

Does she feel like your roommate or the object of your love? *[pauseeee]*

Husbands, we have a high model to look up to and live up to, for our pattern to follow is Christ Himself.

Will you rise up to display His amazing love, or droop down in self-service? *[pauseeee]*

For husbands, who feel like you have failed: Know that there is forgiveness in Christ. *[pause]*

Confess your sin and failing to God and your wife, admitting that you've not loved her like Christ.

And know that there's now an opportunity to love your wife today and in the days ahead. *[pauseeee]*

Know also that we are not left to our own strength and abilities to do this...

This instruction is hard at times, but we have the Holy Spirit to empower us to live like Christ. *[pause]*

Rely upon the Lord, and not your own strength. *[pause]*

Trust Him with this task, for it's a high and holy task.

But it will be worth it, for your wife will get to be the recipient of Christ-like love that gives of itself for another...

And you will get to experience the joy of showing her and others even a small glimpse of the love of Christ for His bride.