

Podcast 220 The New Commandment is to Love Our Wives as Christ Loves Us

We're still building on our theme, which is how to build up our wife and how to love our wives as Christ loved the church.

And I think these next two episodes are going to shape the rest of the episode. So I hope people will take heed to these and not skip them. I don't know about everybody else, but as a man, if I heard that there was going to be a podcast series on how to love my wife as Christ loved the church, I'd want a checklist. I'd want it to do thing. And I'm trying to avoid that, not avoid it, but set the stage better for it so that those all come in context because when the heart is right, then everything else flows from that. And so what we're trying to do is make sure we have the right attitude, how we use our authority, and we understand kind of the basis for that command to love your wife as Christ loved the church before we jump into specific ways that we can do that. So that's what I saw in my heart and that's what we're trying to do today and in the next episode.

Let's pray: Father, thank You for not just giving us lists and checklists and to do lists, but Your scripture gives us more and a bigger picture. And Paul said, "I shrank not from declaring the whole counsel of God." And I pray that You will help us as we contemplate this privilege, high calling, life-changing calling of how to love each other as Christ loved the church today. Give us ears to hear what the spirit is saying to us today. In Jesus name. Amen.

When Jesus was asked in Matthew 22 they said, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" He quoted Deuteronomy 6:5. And here's the scripture. Well, I'm still reading Matthew 22. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And He said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment." So that's the answer to the first question. Our primary responsibility is always to love God with all our heart, all our soul, and with all our mind. Now the second part of that Matthew 22 passage says, "And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

Now those are bold in my notes, the law and the prophets. So most of the time when I asked that question, what are the two commandments that we each need to do? People will say, "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength," and then they'll say, "And love your neighbor as yourself." And I would've said the same thing until about seven years ago when I was reading in this John chapter 15 and I'm going to read this now, then I'm going to go back and explain it.

In John 15:9 Jesus says, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." And then three verses later, He says, "As I have loved you, love each other." Okay, so normally when I'm standing in front of an audience, I've got my hands open right now, even when I'm telling you this, even though nobody can see them but me, I think of this, I lift my hand high and I bring it down from above, down towards the son. So what Jesus is saying is, "As my father has loved me, so have I loved you." And then He says three verses later, "And as I have loved you, I want you to love each other the same way." So now let me read the actual passages. "As the father has loved me. So have I loved you." John 15:9. "This is my commandment, love each other in the same way I have loved you."

And what I'm going to make a distinction is, is this, that loving each other as God has loved us is different than loving each other as we want to be loved. Let me illustrate this and then I'll go back and explain it some more. When I was a newlywed, if I got sick, it was kind of a surprise to my wife, but I didn't want to be around anybody. I just wanted to be by myself. I just wanted to kind of lock myself in my room with a stack of books to read and just wait until I was better. And if she wanted to bring some

food or something, great. But I didn't want to play cards. I didn't want to have my back rubbed, I just wanted to be left alone.

Then Sandi got sick and I treated her like I wanted to be treated. I just left her alone. And I think maybe at that point we even had some kids and I pretty much said, "I'll take care of the kids. You just go get better. Do whatever you want to do. You can sleep, you can read, you can, I don't know, whatever it takes to get better." And that was the exact opposite of what she wanted. She wanted me to come in and play cards and rub her back and be with her. But the thing is is that I was looking at her through the lens of the second commandment, which is to love your neighbor as yourself.

I was treating her like I wanted to be treated and it didn't work. And when you think about what Jesus was saying is "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And he said, "All the law and the profits are based on these two commandments, to love God and love your neighbor as yourself." One time I was preaching a sermon and I said, "Let's test that phrase." And so I took the 10 commandments and I said, "Let's go through each of the 10 commandments and decide which one is based on loving God with all your heart soul, mind and strength and which one is based on loving your neighbor as yourself." And we categorized them.

So obviously not worshiping idols would be loving God, not taking God's name in vain would be loving God. And then obviously not killing your neighbor, not coveting his land, not committing adultery with his wife, those would be based on loving your neighbor as yourself. And it was interesting because that's what Jesus said is the whole law and the prophets. Everything from Genesis to Malachi is based on loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself. But I think what happened is, is that in John 13... And John 13 through 17 is some of the deepest part of the New Testament to me because this is pretty much Jesus' farewell advice. He's about to be crucified. He pours out His heart teaching His disciples things that He's been waiting for them to learn and they've been coming along slowly. He's been discipling them and then He gives them the good stuff.

John 17 about the unity. John 15, abide in Christ. John 14 I'm going to prepare a place for you. I'm the way, the truth and the life. 14, 15, 16 have a lot on the Holy spirit. But in John 13:34-35 here's what he says, "I am giving you a new commandment. Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." And that's the only time that I found the New Testament that he uses that word, "I'm giving you a 'new' commandment." So I think what He did was He took love your neighbor as yourself up a notch, just like He did six or seven times in the sermon on the Mount when He said, "You have heard that it was said you should not kill your neighbor. I say to you, don't even hate your neighbor in your heart." So He didn't negate the fact that you shouldn't kill your neighbor. He just said, "I don't even want you to hate your neighbor, let alone kill them."

And so He took it up to a different level. And I think that's what happens in John 13:34-35. He says, "Love each other just as I have loved you." And so I've thought a lot about that. What does it mean to love Sandy as God has loved me? And instead of looking at her like I used to when I was sick and thinking, "How would I want to be treated if I'm sick?" Instead, my eyes are up and I don't look at her through my lens or through her lens. I look at her through the lens of Jesus. How has Jesus loved me?

And it's a very different perspective. And I'm going to give you another example just to kind of illustrate this. So I'm getting ahead a little bit on my notes, but in thinking about this, I started making lists of... I just did a seminar on this the other day and I passed out a handout and on the handout has the entire front of the page and the entire back of the page ways that Jesus has loved us. And I restricted it to

ways that I could apply. Because in one sense, Jesus took my sins upon Himself. I can't do that. Jesus died and He broke the power of the devil. I can't do that. So there's a lot of things... He forgave our sins. I can't do that. There's a lot of things that Jesus did for us that we can't duplicate. But there are other ones that I think we can for example.

So I'm making this list and I felt my attention drawn to "Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give Himself a ransom for many." And I thought, "Wow." And that's exactly what He told them right after He gave them a new commandment. He got down on His knees and He washed the disciples feet and He says, "I'm giving you an example. This is how you love each other." But then He served them. And so I thought, "Okay, how can I serve Sandy?" And I came home one day and I cleaned up the kitchen beautifully and when she came home... And in our house, you have to walk through when you park the car in the garage, you have to walk through the kitchen and she came through the kitchen. Kitchen was all spic and span and she didn't say anything and I thought, "Wow."

And I wanted to go kind of hold her by the hand and bring her out and say, "Look at the kitchen, which I just cleaned for you." A typical man. But you know what? I kept my eyes up and I thought, "Huh, I wonder how many times Jesus has done something for me and how many times He served me and I haven't acknowledged it or gone back and said thank you, but that didn't keep Him from continuing to do stuff for me." And I was able, by focusing on Jesus, to just let the fact go that she didn't acknowledge anything I said and I just let it go. And I continued to serve her and I continue to work in a kitchen. And whether she says, "That's wonderful," or acknowledges me or throws me a parade or anything, I just think, "I'm loving my wife as Jesus loved me."

They see that's very different for Steve. But it was also because of this revelation that I began to think about serving because Jesus served me. So I wasn't loving her like I wanted to be loved. I was loving her as I had been loved because Jesus has served me. And I need to remind us something and I know I've said this before on different podcasts and I'm sorry for those that have heard it, but this is where we get in the Easter week. We normally celebrate Sunday as the resurrection day. We celebrate Good Friday as when we celebrate His crucifixion. And then on Thursday night, many churches have something that they call Maundy Thursday, or Maundy, M-A-U-N-D-Y Thursday. And I never understood what that meant. And some churches even, because this was the night when Jesus got down and served His disciples by washing their feet, and many churches will have a foot washing ceremony to celebrate this.

But it turns out that the word Maundy Thursday, Maundy comes from the Latin, which means novum mandatum and mandatum would translate now maundy, which means novum new mandatum, new mandate or new commandment. So the early church was celebrating the giving of the new commandment the night before the crucifixion. But I think in my own thinking, I lost that new commandment in washing of feet. And now I see that this new commandment is really the portal through which we're going to spend the rest of our time studying how we can love our wives. Because in Ephesians 5:25 Paul takes this new commandment and he makes it the husband commandment. How you like that, the new commandment is really the husband commandment. Because here's what he says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." He doesn't say, "Husbands, love your wives as you want to be loved."

He says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ has loved you." And that's the new commandment applied to husbands. And it's exactly, it's even the same terminology as he uses in John 13:34 and 35 and in John 15:12, "Love one another as you have been loved. As I have loved you." And then he gets on to

say, "And gave Himself up for her." So this is where we want to have our focus now. I hope that God will help us to not look at different passages that we're going to talk about because now I just told you I've got two pages and I'm not going to go through each one of them, but I could and two pages. But I want all of our love for our wife to be flowing from how has Jesus loved us? Or as Paul says, "How has Christ loved the church?"

And that becomes the blueprint for how we are to love our wives. Because Jesus is the bridegroom and the church is the bride. So this whole thing parallels, the same thing, as Jesus loved his bride. That's how we are to love our bride. And once we get that, I mean I hardly even have to have the next podcast because I think we're going to get that. I think we're going to. Once we get our eyes open to this is the standard. "How did Jesus love His bride? How can we love our bride?" And once we get that, then everything else will flow from that.

Besides the fact that this will bless your wife, this is what God commanded. This is how God designed us. This is what we were created to do. But what's happened for me is the fruit is, is that I have, instead of looking at my wife and thinking, "Okay, she's from Mars, I'm from Venus, or whichever one it is, and her love language and my love language and..." Which are all helpful, don't get me wrong, but somehow they're all horizontal. But when I get my eyes up vertically and I look at how Jesus has loved me, the fruit is, I ended up understanding Jesus better. And I ended up, the more I take in how much He loved me, I ended up loving Him more, which is the first commandment.

So when we do the new commandment, we actually end up loving God more and fulfilling the first commandment. And that is just another example of the beauty in the wisdom of what God has created when He created marriage. It's a reflection of our divine relationship with God and the fact that we're going to marry Him. And we're going to love Him better, we're going to know Him better and we're going to be more focused on heaven instead of on ourselves.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for the wisdom and the thought and the beauty of this relationship that You have with your people. And I pray that the spirit of God would help us to get our attention focused on Jesus in a whole new way today and help us to meditate on how He has loved us. And then give us divine creativity and show us ways that we can apply this principle and how we can love our wives the same way. In Jesus name, amen.