

THE MYSTERY OF NURTURING AND CHERISHING

During the month of January we have been studying a series on marriage entitled, Mystery of Marriage. This title was taken from Eph.5: 32 –“This (toute referring back to 5:31 and Gen.2: 24) mystery (not revealed until the First Coming of Jesus Christ) is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and with reference to the Church.”

This passage on marriage (Eph.5: 22-33) is part of a greater discussion on the Christian walk in the world started in Eph.4: 17 and ending in Eph.6: 20.

Paul outlined four aspects of the mystery of marriage that we have been studying.

- Jan.4- Mystery of Wife’s Submission & Respect – 5:22-24 (Wife and Church)
- Jan.11 – Mystery of Husband’s Headship – 5:23 (Husband and Christ)
- Jan.18 – Mystery of Husband’s Love & Sacrifice – 5:25-28a (Husband and Church)
- **Jan.25** – Mystery of Husband Nurturing & Cherishing – 5:28b-33 (Husband and Christ and Church)

According to Paul, the great mystery is that Christ came into the world to restore marriage to its original spiritual status prior to the fall of Adam as part of His salvation work.

The Christian husband and wife play an important role in this the spiritual restoration of marriage in the Church Age as part of their Christian walk in the world (5:1-2, 15-16).

Paul has plenty to say to Christian husbands about their relationships with their wives because he had plenty to say about Church members relationships with the Lord Jesus Christ in Eph.5: 22-33 – “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and with reference to the Church.”

In our final lesson, Paul instructs Christian husbands that they are not only the heads of the wives and their source of love and self-sacrificing ones but also the ones who are the nurturing and cherishing in marriages.

We will begin by studying the following six homiletical points regarding the husband’s responsibility of nurturing and cherishing taken from Eph.5: 28b-33.

- Principle (5:28b) “He who **loves** his own wife loves himself (one flesh).”
- Problem (5:29a) “For no one ever hates his own flesh (MAS).”
- Precept (5:29b) “But **nourishes and cherishes** it (part of original status of marriage).”
- Prototype (5:29c) “**Just as Christ** also does the Church (bar raised in Church Age).”
- Prophecy (5:30-32) “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This **mystery is great**; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and with reference to the Church.”
- Precedent (5:33) “Nevertheless let each individual among you also **love his own wife** even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she **respect her husband**.”

The Greek word for nourish or nurture is (ektrepo). It means to nurture so as to further a development of growth (Eph.6: 4). The Greek word for cherish is (thalpo). It means to foster tenderly care out of appreciation.

1. Paul introduces nurturing and cherishing as part of natural as well as doctrinal reasoning.

“For (gar of explanation) no one (oudeis) ever (pote) hates (miseo / a.a.ind) his own flesh (sarx), but (alla / contrast) nourishes and cherishes it.” (5:29)

Note that nurture and cherish of wife are in contrasted to hate of self (MAS). What would cause a husband **not** to nurture or cherish his wife? _____

2. Nurture and cherish are attached to Paul’s previously instruction.

“So (houtos / based on the one Greek sentence and three divine purposes of 5:25-27) husbands ought (opheilo / p.a.ind) also to love their own wives as (hos) their own bodies.” (5:28a)

Christian husbands are instructed to nurture and cherish their wives – “just as (kathos/ compound/ kata and hos/ intensive comparison) Christ also does the church.” (5:29b)

- Nurturing (ektrepho / p.a.ind) is furthering her spiritual growth and development as a wife.
- Cherishing (thalpo / p.a.ind) is fostering the wife with tender care out of appreciation from divine viewpoint and not cosmos diabolicus viewpoint of roles in marriage – “just as Christ also does the church.” **It is all about the wife because it is it is about the church and aren’t you glad.**

3. Nurturing and cherishing operate from God’s love of the filling ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal.5: 22-23; 1 Cor.13: 4-8).

- Seven positives: patient, kind, rejoices with truth, protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.
- Eight negatives: **not** envy, boast, proud, rude, self-seeking, angry, no regard for wrong, and no delight in evil.
- **Agape love never fails.**

4. Christian husbands are instructed to nurture and cherish their own wives because it fulfills the original cleaving of becoming one of Gen.2: 24.

“For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.” (Eph.5: 31) (1+1=1) Note that this statement follows the instructions on nurturing and cherishing (5:28b-31).

5. Christian husbands are given a doctrinal reason to nurture and cherish their wives.

It is related to his relationship with Christ as a member of His church– “because we are members of His body.” (5:30) Christ sets the example of the way Christian husbands treat their wives. You might be thinking, “how can God hold me to this standard since Jesus Christ was perfect?”

Because in the Church Age, God has given every believer grace operating assets such as the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor.6: 19-20) and prayer (Jude 20) and fruit of Spirit (Gal.5: 16-23) and functioning of spiritual gifts (1 Cor.12: 12-27) and priesthood of church (1 Pet.2: 5-9) and completed canon (2 Tim.3: 16-17), and grace Bible teaching church (Eph.4: 11-13).

No matter how our earthly marriage turns out. Our heavenly marriage relationship is eternal. As the bride of Christ, we are always the objects of God’s maximum love –“How great is the love the father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.” (John 3:1)