



Sermon – December 22, 2019  
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**Verses Covered This Week**

*Ephesians 5:28 - 33*

*Revelation 3:20*

*1 Thessalonians 5:23*

So slide over to Ephesians chapter 5. We're going to continue through the text. We'll look at Christmas Tuesday night. I'll walk through Christmas message there. We're going to continue through. Now to remind ourselves of where we are in the text, we looked last week at the fact that you don't chase what you already have. The Bible says you love others as you love yourself. Then the premise is you already love yourself, so you don't chase that. It's already there. What you do is you modify it. If you love Jesus with all your whole soul, mind, and strength, then your love for yourself can become a compass and direct you on how to treat other people. He's going to lay that out inside the marriage. He's going to give you an example. Now if I don't love Jesus with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, then self-love will begin to control me and I become self-centered and selfish and everything is about me. And so the only way for self-love, which everybody has, Bible says no one's ever hated his own flesh, he makes that statement. So everybody has this self-love. So I've got to allow that to be controlled by my love for Jesus Christ and out of that then this becomes a compass, not a control mechanism. My worth is based on what Jesus feels about me. Not what anybody else feels about me. I don't base my worth on how I look or how smart I am or how athletic I am or how much money I have or what kind of home I have or what anybody says or thinks about me. It is based on what Jesus Christ did for me on the cross. Nothing can ever scream your value louder than that. So inside that he now moves into the marriage and here's what he says. 5:28.

<sup>28</sup>So men are obligated to love their own wives as their own bodies. The one who loves himself loves his wife; <sup>29</sup>for nobody ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it, takes care of it, just like Christ the church, <sup>30</sup>we are members of His body.

And then he quotes an Old Testament statement.

<sup>31</sup>Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, shall be joined toward his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

Now he says, "I want you to go into the marriage as men understanding that you're going to love your wife really in the same way that you love yourself and that Christ loves the church. I want those two things to be the basis of how you love your wife." Now that's his argument. And he quotes an Old Testament saying which doesn't mean a lot to us. But it was key in that day. When you read the New Testament, you get a picture. You don't realize, but you get a picture of what was basically a Jewish marriage idea in that day. The guy would find a young lady, fall in love with her, they're going to get married. And so he'd say to her, "OK. We're going to get married. I'm going to go prepare our home. You get ready." And so she would go home and get everything together and she never knew when he was coming. Now I'm sure there were people that said, "He's close." But she never was totally told. She had to be ready each day. He would go home and for the most part he would add to the family home. He would build rooms onto the family home so that what he was doing was bringing her into his family dynamic. Now they were no different than we are. Bring a new wife into the mother-in-law's domain. Suddenly there are issues. I don't care if you're Jewish, Roman, Gentile, American; doesn't matter. And the problem was, he's pulling her into his family. The Bible never says for the woman to leave her home because she automatically leaves her home. He would walk down the street, people would go to her house, bridegroom's coming, they would meet and have an all-day festivity, they'd have a ceremony, he'd take her home and put her in the rooms he built for her that are connected to mom, who made the best spaghetti ever made. Because I'm sure they had Italian food back then. Paul did visit Rome.

So they made the best spaghetti ever and now she's got to deal with this. And so he says, I want you, when you get her home, one of the ways you're going to love her as Christ loved the church, one of the ways you're going to love her as yourself is you are going to elevate her above your family. She has to feel that. She has to believe that. She has to know that. But you're going to make sure that when she comes into this home, no matter what your mother says, and you've been living with your mother for 20 years, she's never been in the home with your mother, now she's here. You've got all these issues, but your wife is now the number one woman in your life. And she is elevated over against your mother and anybody else in the family. Even though you're living in the same building; it's her home. Because you make it that way. So you're going to love her as Christ loved the church. You're going to love her as you love yourself. And you're going to make sure one example of that is she is elevated in a home where she is going to struggle with your family's culture versus her culture and coming in, she is alone. Because you went to her house, you got her, you pulled her home, you're going to honor her above every other person in your family.

Now that's the construct. But then he adds this. Now listen. Verse 32.

<sup>32</sup>The mystery is great; but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Now he's arguing a couple things. We'll get to the second one in a minute. But he's arguing that if you love her properly, you're going to love her as Christ loved the church. How exactly did he do that? Now in Revelation chapter 3, verse 20; we use this as a Baptist verse for evangelism, but it has zero to do with evangelism. It's Jesus, He's writing a letter to a church in Laodicea, and He says, "I'm outside the church." They don't even know that He's not in the church. So it's His church, it's people that are believers. He's knocking. One thing about Jesus Christ He never pushes Himself on anybody. So He's knocking. Listen to what He says.

<sup>20</sup>I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking; if anybody should hear My voice and open the door, I will come into him, and here's literally the Greek, I will have supper with him and he will have supper with Me.

Now that is what Jesus Christ wants to do with us, right. He wants to have supper with us. He wants it to be a relaxed occasion. We fellowship. We talk. We commune. We build a relationship. It's easy, there's no guilt. There's no problem; everything's been removed. So what Jesus wants to do for all of us, He wants to bring us in and build a fellowship and a relationship with us that is real, legitimate, authentic, dynamic, and lasting. Now when he says in Ephesians 5, I'm talking about Christ and the church, what he's saying is, as a husband, I need to do with my wife what Jesus Christ wants to do with His church. Now how do you really do that? I mean, honestly, there are a billion books out there. I get that. So I want you to look at the Bible with me. I want you to go to 1 Thessalonians 5. I want you to listen to verse 23. The end of his letter. He's writing all sorts of kind of final exhortations, things to do. Now I want you to listen to what he says about us in this room. Because this has bearing on building a relationship with your wife. Here's what he says:

<sup>23</sup>But God Himself, the God Himself of peace; may He sanctify you completely and totally, with your spirit, soul, and body, being kept blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now listen to what he says to you. You're a three-part person: body, soul, and spirit. You are three parts. Your body is designed so you can relate to each other physically. Your soul is so you can relate to each other emotionally. The Bible says in the Old Testament that the soul of Jonathan was knit together with the soul of David. And then your spirit has been made alive and now your spirit has the ability to connect with the Holy Spirit so you can connect with the Father. So you are a spiritual person, an emotional person, and a physical person. Now here's part of the problem, is all those coordinate. You can't really compartmentalize them because they all impact each other. I had a lady tell me a story one time, and she said I could share this, but she and her husband had come to church and had a fight that morning. Imagine, imagine that. I told you I found the cure; my wife and I take different cars. So if that's an issue for you, get a Volkswagen or something and just drive differently. Or a bike, whatever works. So they had this fight and as normal the man wasn't very forgiving. They weren't talking and they were going through the normal marriage ritual of this: fine, where do you want to eat, I don't care. So they're going through the normal, crisp, terse, comments. She said they get in the car to come back to church Sunday night. She said, "I'm still hacked. He hasn't said anything." She said, "He did one thing. He reached over, grabbed my hand in the car." And she said, "Every bit of anger dissipated and left." It's a vast connection between the physical, the spiritual, the emotional. You can't perfectly compartmentalize it. But you kind of have to think that way so that we understand.

So if you're going to fellowship with each other and have supper together as a husband and wife, you're going to do it on three levels. You're going to do it spiritually. And we talked about this. Talked about the fact you may not know as much Bible as your wife knows. But you're going to live it out. You're going to honor what you do know about the Bible in your life and you're going to model it consistently, not perfectly, but you're going to model it consistently. And you're going to have a spiritual impact on your wife. Now I know everybody wants to do Bible studies together.

It's great. Let me just give you one suggestion. Don't try to do it every day because you'll quit and feel guilty and then you'll stop. So let me give you just a real simple suggestion. You can do this. It's really easy. You have a date night, so you need to be gone. The great thing about children being gone; every night's a date night. Let me tell you, the best times in your kids, the best time in your kid's life is birth, rebirth, driver's license, and gone. Those are your best times. So if they're not gone, you've got them, you need a date night. Now what I would do on this date night, there are, any Bible has little paragraphs or little sections you can see them very easily. I would start in a book like Colossians or Gospel of Mark, whatever. And I would take, for a week, gentlemen, you're the head of the home, I would take for a week and I would read that section of Scripture and I'd ask myself, and write down, answers to three questions. What is in here I understand? What is in here I don't understand? What does this mean for our marriage? And then your wife does the same thing. So when you go out on Thursday night, whatever it is, you sit down and you begin to share. And it's not like you're having to do a Bible study and you're having to teach. Even if she knows more than you know in the Scripture, you can do those three things with any passage of Scripture. So you spiritually connect as best you can. But I think the main thing, you make sure you live out what you say you believe.

Now emotionally, you have supper together emotionally. This is the hard part for men. Women connect by doing two things. They talk a lot and they ask questions a lot. I don't know how many times I've looked at my wife and said, "It's all I know. I don't have any other answers. I've told you all I know." It is difficult because we are different. But you've got to figure out a way to balance that and adapt that so that you can fellowship emotionally together. You've got to build an emotional relationship. You say, "So we've got to talk about deep things?" There really aren't many deep things, OK. Once you figure out where you're going to live, what your career is, what church you're going to, what deer lease you're on. When you find the really big things, once you find those things, that's really pretty much it. So emotional connection is simply living out the small things and talking about everything that's happening in your life. Most of which is going to be small. And that's it. You communicate over those things. I shared a story several times in my office, but I had a couple in Midland that a lady called me about and said, "I want you to talk to this couple. They're Methodist but they're about to divorce. Will you meet with them Friday night, 10:00?" "Sure. They don't go to my church. Sure. I'll meet them Friday night at 10:00. How much money do they have?" So we meet. They sit down. They haven't been in the chair five minutes. They are blistering each other. I mean wearing each other out. So I listen to this for about 15 minutes. I said, "OK. OK. Now," And I read them Scripture in Revelation where it says, you've left your first love. Remember from where you've fallen and repent and do the things you did at first. So I said, "Bible says remember where you've fallen. Do you remember a time when you loved each other?" And they kind of look at each other kind of like, "Yeah." I said, "OK. I'm thinking, 'Man, I am so tired. I want to go home.'" I said, "OK." I said, "So, back when you loved each other. Bible says do the things you did at first. What did you do back then together when you loved each other?" Now this is always a hard time for a pastor because they looked at each other kind of funny and then he said the words every pastor fears to hear. "Well, I'm kind of embarrassed to tell you." Because now as a pastor, you don't know what's coming and it's probably not good. So you get on the pastor face like I've heard this before. All the while thinking, "Oh this is not going to be good." So he said, "Here's what we used to do." So I'm braced. He said, "We were in college. There was a grocery store across from the campus. I would go over and steal a grocery basket, put her in it, and push her around campus and we'd talk." Mentally I went, "Oh, OK. Thank You, Jesus." So I said, "Well let me just pray a second." So

as I exhaled I said, "Look, I don't think you ought to steal a grocery basket." I said, "At this age you could be in a lot of trouble." So here's what I want you to do. Just get each other, grab hands, walk around the neighborhood, and talk. They left my office. I went home. About a month later I heard from this couple that asked me to meet with them. They said, "You're not going to believe this, but they are absolutely in love with each other. They're at work in the Methodist Church, they're involved now." And she said, "It is phenomenal." Because it's that simple. We have made it so incredibly complicated and difficult. It is a matter of spending time with each other in a great way. That's why he uses the word in Revelation. He could have used any word. But he used the Greek word, I want to have supper with you. Supper is that time where we relax, we're having a great time, we're eating, we're enjoying, we're fellowshiping. That's what it is. It is a man and woman enjoying each other. And it doesn't mean you go to Paris and you have to have these romantic outings. I know we're in a crazy day. All these crazy reveal things people do. They're getting married in these crazy ways. I asked my wife on a piano bench. "What do you think? Want to take a shot?" So there we went. We're in a crazy day. I get that. But I'm telling you. We made everything so complex when marriage is really, emotionally connected together, is that simple. My wife and I came up the other night. We're in the camper with a 70-pound animal. So it's crowded. So we brought him up here the other night. We took him to church. Let him out, let him roam, we walked around the church a little bit. We got home, my wife looked at me and says, "You know, that was really fun." Now that's your first sign when you're older. It's like going to the grocery store. Hot date. Hot date when you're older. We took the dog to the church and walked around. So, I don't care what it is. You just fellowship with each other. So if I'm going to love my wife like Christ loved the church, I'm going to want to have supper with her in the same way Jesus wants to have supper with us. Which means we're going to work with each other spiritually. We're going to work with each other emotionally. We're going to work with each other physically. That's why the Bible says your body's not your own, 1 Corinthians 6, it's not just talking about physical intimacy. It's talking about connection.

So, now, so gentlemen, I have this responsibility to love my wife as I love myself. So it's my compass, not control. I do it based on my love for Jesus Christ. I want to love her the way Christ loved the church. I want to develop a relationship with her the way Christ developed a relationship with the church. Why? He ends it by saying:

<sup>33</sup>Nevertheless, I tell you, let the man, each man love his wife and let the wife respect her husband.

And the whole thing in Ephesians 5 when he says, this is about Christ and the church, this is a mystery. He says that over and over and over. The whole thing is, now listen, your home is the first place you demonstrate the reality of who you are in Jesus Christ. It's your home. Now we're struggling because we're ending our homes at the same rate they are. Now let me be clear about something. There are people that are divorced, it's not their fault. We've got to quit looking at people going, "They're divorced so they must have failed." No. There are people whose spouses failed, but they didn't. So not all divorces are equal. But a lot of divorces have no cause inside God's house. And we are, our homes, are the first statement that we make that vindicates what we say about Jesus. Now you think about Ephesus, OK. Paul dies in the late 60's. So this letter is probably written late 50's. Jesus died in probably 27 so Christianity's maybe 25, 30 years down the road. So if you're a Christian in Ephesus, you're going to church, you're living in your life and people say to you, "Why do you go to that building every Sunday? What do y'all do in there?"

And you say, “We go and we worship Jesus.” They don’t know who that is. You’re the first generation of Christians. We live in a country people know what it is. That’s why they use it for a cuss word. They don’t have any idea who Jesus is. So when they look at you and they go, “Jesus. Who is He?” “Well, He’s God in the flesh. He’s Savior of the world.” “What? What has He done in your life?” Bingo! “He changed our home.” Because if you’re a Jewish woman in a male dominated Jewish society, you have no value. And if he doesn’t like the way you cook, he can literally send you out. He has to give you a piece of paper that says you didn’t have an affair so you won’t be stoned, but you had no value and you didn’t have much more value as a Roman woman in a Roman home. So as a Christian woman, you look at these people and say, “Let me tell you something. I’m the number one person in my husband’s life other than Jesus Christ.” They are blown away. And when they talk about, “I respect my husband for who he is.” And “I love my wife for who she is.” And you build this intimacy that they don’t have. You testify to who Jesus is. Now listen. We are back to Ephesian days. Now when I first entered the ministry, and it’s been this way for two or three generations, you had generations of kids who went to church. And so when they all of a sudden get to a certain age and they get married, maybe they don’t go to church, they quit in college. But they have a couple kids. First thing in their mindset, “Hey, we need to go back to church.” You don’t hear that anymore because now we’re dealing with generations of people who have never been in church. We’re back to Ephesian days. As a matter of fact, we’re now living with a culture that sees no value in being married at all. We’ll just live together and, you know, if it doesn’t work then we’re not bound. We don’t have to do all this legal stuff. We can just go. Now that sounds good except for one thing. I want you to listen to me today. In Genesis it says God created male and female. The only time relationships are not bankrupt is when it’s a man and a woman, listen, in a covenant of marriage. I don’t care if you went down to the local JP. It’s when you, in Jesus, look at each other and say, “We are serious. We’re committed.” And when you do that in Jesus Christ and you allow Him to alter your life, you dictate to the world who your Savior is. Now we’re in a culture that if that’s true, they’re bankrupt emotionally. I don’t want to live with a woman that I’m not sure she’s going to be there tomorrow. I want to live with a woman that even if I mess up is going to be there and stand with me and honor me. That’s worth the commitment. That’s how God designed it. And as this culture steps away from the design and they change here and they change here and they change. They’re going to discover the bankruptcy of their position. And here’s your chance. When they say, “You go to church? Why do you do that?” “Because I worship Jesus.” “Why?” “Because He forgave me of my sins, changed my life, and He did something in my marriage that you really want but you don’t have.” We, in our marriages, have a chance to demonstrate to an Ephesian culture the beauty and the power of Jesus Christ. Let’s make sure this Christmas we do that.

Let’s pray.

Father, thank You for the clarity, the integrity of what Your word says. Make it clear to us. And Father, again, not for guilt sake, heal us in our homes so that when we step out there they see Your Son by how we live our lives. Let that be clear. Father, I ask You that in Jesus Christ name.