

BUILDING A GODLY HOME

3. HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES

I.

Introduction

In the past I spoke on the subject of home. I said that God has His own recipe for godly home that we need to follow. The ingredients it calls for are:

Eph 5:1 ¶ Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Eph 6:1 ¶ Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Eph 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Today I would like to continue to speak on the subject of godly home and deal in detail with the third ingredient:

II.

Building a godly home

3 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Love in this verse is not an emotional love of husband toward his wife. The words “love” are translations of Greek verb “agapao” which mean to love in moral sense. It is striving for good of wife. It is sacrificial love. From it is derived noun form “agape” which means love in moral sense.

Although this verse does not speak about emotional love, I will begin with emotional love to show interesting connection between emotional love and agape love.

When we first fell in love with our wives and got married I do not think anybody would have to command us to have emotional love for our wives. It came naturally. God equipped us with it. This emotional love motivated us and charged us with emotional energy to present ourselves to one another and to act to one another in accordance with our best qualities, while suppressing our bad qualities, bad habits, selfishness. In other words, in the beginning of our marriages, our wives kept themselves beautiful, elegant, were lovely, kind, patient, attentive and willing to make sacrifices for their husbands. They were trying to look and act perfectly. Likewise, we as husbands, kept ourselves groomed, were gentle, kind, patient, attentive and willing to make sacrifices for our wives. We were trying to look and act perfectly.

No sacrifice was too big for the two. Thus in the beginning of the marriage, both of them motivated with emotional love and charged with emotional energy actually acted to one another also in harmony with agape love, for they were striving for good of one another and made all necessary sacrifices, even without having to think much about it, or exerting conscious effort for it. It was needed to be done for good of the other one or both of them so they did it.

For instance, my wife Tami, left her homeland, her family, friends, work, culture, language and moved across the ocean to live with me, her husband in a foreign country, strange culture, where people speak strange language. Was it a sacrifice? Yes, it was a great sacrifice! This first period of marriage was period of honeymoon.

However, it is hard always look and act perfectly, always putting the other one on the first place, always bringing the sacrifices. It requires more and more energy to do that and at the same time to fight with oneself, to deny oneself and to put the other one first. Emotional love alone is not sufficient motivator anymore. It is not as strong as it used to be in the beginning and it does not charge one with as much emotional energy as in the beginning. Now, it requires more conscious effort to deny oneself and to put the other one first. In other words, it requires to practice agape love. One thing is to love agapao other people on occasions. Another thing is to love agapao constantly. It requires lots of practice.

When the honeymoon period with its boost of emotional love and energy is over, and agape love is not applied constantly, the two start slowly slipping back into their original grooves. It is time when husband and wife are slowly becoming their old selves. Now, small differences, small clashes of opinions and preferences come to surface, which have their roots in their different backgrounds, different tempers, different daily routines and habits (including the bad ones) established in long periods of their previous separate lifestyles.

Now, wife does not always put forth the effort to look beautiful and does not always put her husband first. For instance, while in the beginning wife gave her frequent attention to her husband, now she goes through frequent not feeling well periods, periods of feeling sick or periods of feeling tired. Husband will of course notice the change, but what escapes his notice is that even he does not always put forth the effort to look groomed and does not always put her wife first. For instance, while in the beginning husband lavished his wife with compliments, expressions of love, avalanche of words, now, wife has sometimes problem to get even a simple sentence that make sense out of him. Both of them are less prone to make sacrifices for one another. Both become more critical of one another.

Small differences, clashes of opinions, and misunderstandings cumulate, first problems arise. If they discuss the problems, how each of them caused them and what each of them needs to do to remove the problems, it will actually benefit to their marriage. They are learning to work as a team. They are also learning to make conscious effort to put agape love in practice. Part of agape love is to correct each other in loving manner. That sometimes requires to tell truth that is unpleasant to say and unpleasant to listen to, even if it is done in loving manner. Now, the mechanism is established that will help them to solve future problems.

However, if they do not discuss the problems (for whatever reasons, e.g. one may not be aware of the problems while the other one's pride is too offended to discuss them) and carry them within themselves, small problems cumulate and become big problems. Then one day, one of them frustrated by the load of unresolved problems explodes in negative emotions. The two have opened the door for a devil to enter into marriage relationship to start working on its destruction through lack of agape love on the first place and consequently through disappointments, self-pity, bad feelings, anger, criticism, arguments, insensitivity, negative emotions. All these negative things exhaust their sources of emotional love and energy and demotivate them to renew them and to put the extra effort to agapao each other.

If they continue like that for some time, they waste away their emotional love and never really learn to put in practice agape love. After several years they might realize they feel nothing to each other and are two strangers who have nothing in common.

At this point, if husband or wife or both of them are from the world where word love is often equated with emotions, or more recently equated with sex, their marriage will most probably end in divorce, because they do not feel anything to one another, they cannot go on living in this mess of unresolved problems and negative emotions. Divorce appears to them to be a quick solution to all of this.

However, we are Christians. We understand that love which God commanded us to have for one another is agape. We understand that agape love is not emotional love or physical love.

Jesus Christ made conscious decision to love us with agape love manifested by Him giving His life for our sins on the cross and we made conscious decision to love Jesus with agape love by obeying His commandments. This is the only way how we can love God. God is the one who created us and instituted marriage union between husband and wife. He is the third party of the marriage covenant we made with our wife when we got married. It is not without interest that now God commands us husbands to agapao our wives and not vice versa. Why is that? Because, he put husbands in authority over their wives. Husband is the head of his wife like Jesus is the head of church. Husband must bring sacrifices for his wife like Jesus sacrificed Himself for church. Husband must set the example of agape love like Jesus set the example of agape love for church. Husband must be spiritual leader of his wife, like Jesus is spiritual leader of the church.

To God is irrelevant, that wife does not look as beautiful, does not look and act as perfect as she had looked and acted in the beginning of marriage. She is the wife husband was joined to by God in lifelong marriage covenant and with exception of death or sexual immorality on her part for which husband could divorce her, she is the only wife he can have.

Now, how can a “perfect” husband (he is quick to notice that his wife changed for worse, but he is not aware that he himself changed for worse as well) endure the rest of his life with such imperfect wife when emotional love is exhausted, and due to problems in marriage, hampered from regenerating? The answer is make conscious decision and effort to agapao his wife. Why? Firstly, because Jesus did the same thing for him when He died on the cross. Secondly, because God commands it in Eph 5:25. Thirdly, because he made marriage covenant with God and his wife.

Jesus Christ is the center of love - agapao. It came from Him to us when He did something great for us (died on the cross for our sins) and it returns to Him from us when we do something for Him (obey His commandments), in this particular case, love our wives to the point when we are willing to die for them.

In other words, the way how we as husbands treat our wives, determines if we obey Jesus' commandment to love our wives the way Jesus loved the church or not. If we do not love - agapao our wives – strive for their good, bring sacrifices, we cannot love God, for we do not keep His commandment.

If you make conscious effort to love - agapao your wife, in view of eternity it will not matter that she is not always beautiful, lovely, intelligent, patient, attentive, kind, willing to make sacrifices. Neither you are. It will not matter that she does not like everything you like, or she is not a perfect

cook. If you do not like her cooking, you can always cook for yourself or eat bread and cheese. It will not matter, that she does not give her attention to you because of her not feeling well, feeling sick or tired periods. Use such times and energy for work that employs your mind.

If you make conscious effort to love - agapao your wife, in view of eternity, you will be able to raise above petty details of life such as dirty floors, dusty furniture, no food cooked, piles of dirty cloths, etc. Love - agapao will motivate you to help out your wife based on your abilities. That disqualifies me from helping Tami with cooking, but I can at least put the dishes to dishwasher, clean up kitchen, vacuum floors, take out trash, hang washed cloths on the rack, play with children, give her some time to rest after spending day after day with children at home regardless that I had a busy day at work and have more work to do from home. I am sure you can help out your wives in similar fashion. This is love – agapao. This is the kind of love Jesus had for you when He died for you on the cross.

With you raised above things that in view of eternity do not matter or are petty details and thus avoiding clashes with your wife, that would waste away your emotional love, you will be able to hug and kiss your wife when you go to work and come back home from work, tell her that you love her, praise her beauty and cooking, etc. sincerely, cheerfully, kindly, lovingly without any internal reservations, without any bad feelings toward her. The result is that your wife will feel loved and it will help her to love you with love - agapao and emotional love as well as submit herself to your spiritual leadership. Thus practicing love - agapao toward wife will help to regenerate mutual emotional love between the two. Mutual love – agapao and mutual emotional love between husband and wife will give stability to Christian homes, where the needs of family members can be met in harmony with God's Word and it contributes greatly to building a godly home in our home.

III. Conclusion

I would like to conclude this sermon by saying to husbands: It does not matter that our wives are not perfect. They are the most perfect wives we have. Besides, neither we are perfect. Let's love our wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. We have plenty opportunities for it every day and when by the end of day we will think: "What did I do for my Lord today?" If nothing else, we will be able to say: "I loved my wife, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. Now, wives, if your husbands do not manifest this kind of love to you every day, ask them: "What did you do for the Lord today?"

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