

We've been studying Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. And for a couple of weeks now, we've been learning about sacrificial love, and sacrificial living.

And last week, we began to consider what this sacrificial love and sacrificial living looks like, in a marriage relationship. And because Paul spoke firstly to the wives, that's where we began. And I said to the wives, "I hope you bring your husbands to church next week (which is now today), because this passage has more to say to the husbands, than it does to the wives."

OK? – But I want to begin with a little re-cap of last week, and I'm just going to give you a few points to remember:

1. Firstly, Sacrificial love and sacrificial living, includes a life of living in submission. All Christians – not just women – are told to submit to one another. In practice, we submit to Christ; we submit to one-another in the church; we submit to the authorities that God has put over us; we submit to our employers; we submit to our parents We don't submit because we are weak, but because we are strong. We are not **forced** to submit, but we voluntarily submit to one another, out of reverence to Christ.
2. Secondly, we touched on God's model for government. And God's model for government, is **not** a dictatorship, nor is it a democracy. God's model for government, is that some are chosen to lead, and others are to accept that leadership, and to come **under** that leadership. And so God's model for government, is leadership and loyalty.

And the simplest form of government, is the governance

of the family. And so within the family, God's design is for there to be leadership and loyalty. And God has appointed the husbands, to be leaders. Marriage is not designed to be a democracy. In a democracy of 2, the one who makes the decisions will end up being the toughest, the most over-bearing, or the most manipulative. And that's why God's design, is not democracy.

3. But this leadership, is not a dictatorship. Leadership, in the family, is to be sacrificial leadership, where the husband leads, selflessly, and giving of himself, for the best interests of his wife.
4. To **lead** selflessly, is an expression of sacrificial love. And to accept to live **under** that leadership – to willingly submit **to** that leadership, is **also** an expression of sacrificial love. Husbands, if you don't love your wives sacrificially, you're going to be a terrible leader. And wives, if you don't love your husband sacrificially, you're going to hate the very thought of submission.
5. And so, self-seeking behaviour (from either party), is what puts a marriage in peril. But we can guard against this self-seeking behaviour, by living a life of worship. It's hard to be self seeking, when we worship the one, who gave it all...

So that's where we left off last week. And there's a fair bit there, that we've already said to the men. But in addition to that, the most of what we say today, is going to be directed also to the men. So ladies, you get it a bit easy today.

About a dozen years ago, I badly smashed the Talus, which is a very important bone, inside the ankle joint. The Talus transfers your entire body weight, to the rest of the bones in your foot. And it's not a good bone to break, because it doesn't have a very good blood supply, and so it doesn't heal very well.

And when the Orthopaedic surgeon – Because it was such a major injury, I ended up with the head honcho (the consultant) – and when he caught up with me, he said, “I hope when the other doctors described this injury to you, they used the word “big”, and used it often...”. He said “Often, with even a simple break, this bone will not heal, and yours has been pulverised.”..

“But”, he said, “We'll give it a go. We've screwed the 3 biggest pieces back together, and we've cleaned the rest out, and we'll see how it goes, but the odds are, you'll be back here, to get this ankle fused.

He was straight with me. He told me the truth, right from the word “Go”.

And sure enough, we persisted with it for a couple of years, but the bone collapsed, and he said, “We're going to have to fuse your ankle”.

Only, this time he lied to me. He said to me, “Michael, you have to understand that this is the biggest decision you'll ever make. It means your ankle will never bend again – there's no going back. It's bigger than deciding what house you're going to buy. It's bigger than choosing a career. It's even bigger than deciding who you're going to marry...” And there was the lie.

You see, my doctor's understanding of marriage was, if you make the wrong decision, it can be undone, and you can have another go.

*I'd say "getting my ankle fused" – yep, it was an important decision – but it's not **the** most important:*

- The single most important decision I've ever made, was to say "Yes" to Jesus, and to become His disciple*
- The second most important decision I've ever made, was to take the hand of Robyn Stehbens, and before our friends and family, and in the presence of God, we became husband and wife*

You see, the doctor understood very well, the consequences of the decision to get this ankle fused. Two separate bones, were joined together. They actually chopped another, off of my Fibula, which is the small bone that runs down the back of your leg. And they mashed it up into a putty, and jammed it all into the joint, where it would grow into one solid mass of bone, never to bend again. Two pieces of living bone, became one flesh.

The doctor understood that, and he knew it couldn't be undone.

What he didn't understand, is that's exactly what happens in marriage. Two separate people, are joined together, and they too, become one flesh.

And the rot sets in, when that one-flesh relationship gets torn apart. It begins when we are self-centred, and try to live as

two separate people. And that's why there's so much brokenness to deal with, when a marriage is ended...

And Paul says, **husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.**
²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church

Husbands, "How much **do** you love your wives?" Do you love them as much as you love yourself?

Christ loves the church (His own body). When husbands love their wives, they're loving their own body. Husband and wife, become one flesh. And we have to start seeing our wives, as part of ourselves...

There's an amazing revelation here, about Christ:
As the church – as disciples of Jesus Christ – you are; I am; we are – His body.... That's amazing? We come to the communion table, and we remember Christ, and we eat the piece of bread – the body of Christ – and we revere Him... But communion isn't just something you do with a piece of bread (all on your own). We take communion together – **as the body of Christ....**

If you don't love, your fellow disciple – you cannot love Christ. If you do not love the rest of the body, you do not love Christ. ^{1 John 4:20} **If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar.....**

The people around you, are the body of Christ, and so as we love Christ, we must also love one-another.

Now, what sort of love should husbands have for their wives?

Because I obviously don't love my wife the same as I love T-bone steak – Hmmm T-bone... - They're different sorts of love, aren't they? And there we have the limitations of the English language.

I've probably told you this before – but the New Testament was originally written in Greek. And the Greek New Testament actually uses 3 different words for “love”. Phileo, Eros and Agape.

Phileo – is a brotherly love – a companionable love
Eros – is the sexy, make your heart race sort of love – it's the romance love.

Agape – is the sort of love that God shows us. It is used
*“especially of love as based on evaluation and choice, a matter of will and action”*ⁱ

So, what sort of love do husbands need to have for their wives? ... Well, I'd say “All three”.

It usually begins with the eros love. Boy meets girl. Girl meets boy. Girl flutters her eyelids at boy. Boy's heart races, and they get all sorts of gooey feelings they've never had before.... This is the romantic love...

The trouble with falling in love though, is you can just as easily fall out of it – if your idea of love is just romantic love, that is....

But as love develops between a man and a woman, it tends to grow into this Phileo love – the brotherly love – a companionable love... A love where you just enjoy being in one another's company.....

And so, marriages need both these kinds of love...

But at some stage, eros and phileo (romance and enjoying one another's company), can sometimes fade.

There will be times you **don't** feel romantic about each other. There will be times when you're **not** enjoying the other person's company..... How can love be never ending, when the feelings seem to have **come** to an end???

Well, there is one form of love that **never** fades. And the more we practice this kind of love, the more the other forms of love, will be given new life...

Agape love – this love which is an act of the will – is the sort of love that husbands are commanded to give to their wives. We are to love our wives as Christ loves the church. It's a selfless love. It's a sacrificial love. It's the sort of love that's described in 1 Corinthians 13:⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails.

Husbands, do you love your wives? Here's a pretty good indicator: Read those verses to yourself, and wherever it has the word "love", put your name in there, and read it in relation to your wife, and see how it sounds:

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails.

Now, if you read those verses like that, does it have a ring of truth to it? Or, does it just sound wrong??? It's sort of like looking in a mirror, isn't it???

^{v28} In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,

Men, we need to nourish and cherish our wives. Just because you are the leader in your family, that doesn't mean that you can consume your wife. How did Christ love the church??? Well, He became a servant. Your wife, is not a slave to abuse. She is not a servant to be consumed and used up. If you love your wife, you'll actually serve her... Husbands and wives

serve each other. You will nourish her, to build her up, and you will cherish her...

v31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

When you get married, your relationship with your parents, changes. There is a leaving, and there is a joining. You've left one family, to begin another...

Your wife, is part of you. Her best interests, are your best interests. Sacrificial leadership, is what Godly husbands do.....

Do we have any perfect husbands, or perfect wives here today???

None of us are perfect, least of all, the person doing the preaching this morning... and so I thank God for His grace and His mercy, and for the chance to begin again...

Yep, you certainly have messed up some stuff in your marriage (as have I)... But our Lord, loves fixing stuff, and He can certainly fix our marriages.

As we submit to Christ, and as we submit to one another – As husbands and wives decide to love one another sacrificially (instead of selfishly)... Marriages can be healed to the glory of God.

Questions???

ⁱ Friberg dictionary in Bibleworks 5