

## **Nourish and Cherish (Eph. 5:28-29)**

*So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. (NKJV)*

In his workbook, *I Sought For a Man*, Bob Harkrider suggests that when a husband displays gentleness in a marriage he will “nourish” and “cherish” his wife. This is the same gentle spirit commanded of all Christians (Gal. 5:22,23) and an essential characteristic of a qualified elder (1 Tim. 3:3).

To nourish and to cherish one’s spouse is to literally feed and clothe her. From a scriptural standpoint it indicates providing for all her necessities of life. This would include her spiritual, physical, and emotional needs.

Let’s take a closer look at these two words and their usage and application in the New Testament.

Cherish - *thalpo* (only here and 1 Thess. 2:7) –originally meant to warm (Vincent’s Vol. III, p. 402) as a bird covering her nest (Deut. 22:6). Metaphorically, “to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care.” (Vine’s NT Words, p. 98).

Nourish – *ektrepho* – “to nurture, to rear (Vine’s NT Words, p.436)

### **The Context: Eph. 5:21-33 (Matthew Henry)**

(21) Here the apostle begins his exhortation to the discharge of relative duties. As a general foundation for these duties, he lays down that rule, “*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*”

There is a mutual submission that Christians owe one to another, condescending to bear one another's burdens: not advancing themselves above others, nor domineering over one another and giving laws to one another. We must be of a yielding and of a submissive spirit, and ready to all the duties of the respective places and stations that God has allotted to us in the world. Where there is this mutual condescension and submission, the duties of all relations will be the better performed.

To the end he speaks of the duties of husbands and wives; and he speaks of these in a Christian manner, setting the church as an example of the wife's subjection, and Christ as an example of love in husbands.

**I. The duty prescribed to wives is submission to their husbands in the Lord.**  
(22) “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord,*” which submission includes the honoring and obeying of them, and that from a principle of love to them. The apostle assigns the reason of this submission from wives: For the husband is the head of the wife,

(23) *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.”*

The metaphor is taken from the head in the natural body, which, being the seat of reason, of wisdom, and of knowledge, and the fountain of sense and motion, is more excellent than the rest of the body. God has given the man the pre-eminence and a right to direct and govern by creation, and in that original law of the relation.

There is a resemblance of Christ's authority over the church in that superiority and headship which God has appointed to the husband. The apostle adds, and he is the Savior of the body. Christ's authority is exercised over the church for the saving of her from evil, and the supplying of her with every thing good for her. In like manner should the husband be employed for the protection and comfort of his spouse; and therefore she should the more cheerfully submit herself unto him.

So it follows, Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ (24) *“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”*

## **II. The duty of husbands (on the other hand), is to love their wives.**

(25) *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...”* The love of Christ to the church is proposed as an example of this, which love of his is a sincere, a pure, an ardent, and constant affection, and that notwithstanding the imperfections and failures that she is guilty of. The greatness of his love to the church appeared in his giving himself unto the death for it.

Observe, As the church's subjection to Christ is proposed as an exemplar to wives, so the love of Christ to his church is proposed as a pattern to husbands; and while such exemplars are offered to both, and so much is required of each, neither has reason to complain of the divine injunctions. The love which God requires from the husband in behalf of his wife will make amends for the subjection which he demands from her to her husband; and the prescribed subjection of the wife will be an abundant return for that love of the husband which God has made her due. The apostle, having mentioned Christ's love to the church, enlarges upon it, assigning the reason why he gave himself for it, namely, that he might sanctify it in this world, and glorify it in the next:

(26) *“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word...”*

--that he might endue all his members with a principle of holiness, and deliver them from the guilt, the pollution, and the dominion of sin. The instrumental means whereby this is affected are..., particularly the washing of baptism and the preaching and reception of the gospel.

(27) *“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

The church in general, and particular believers, will not be without spot or wrinkle till they come to glory. From this and the former verse together we may take notice that the glorifying of the church is intended in the sanctifying of it: and that those, and those only, who are sanctified now, will be glorified hereafter.

(28) *“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”*

The wife being made one with her husband (not in a natural, but in a civil and in a relative sense), this is an argument why he should love her with as cordial and as ardent an affection as that which he loves himself.

(29) *“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”* No man in his right senses ever hated himself, however deformed, or whatever his imperfections might be; so far from it that he nourishes and cherishes it; he uses himself with a great deal of care and tenderness, and is industrious to supply himself with every thing convenient or good for him, with food and clothing. Even as the Lord the church: that is, as the Lord nourishes and cherishes the church, which he furnishes with all things that he sees needful or good for her, with whatever conduces to her everlasting happiness and welfare.

The apostle adds, (30) *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”* He assigns this as a reason why Christ nourishes and cherishes his church--because all who belong to it are members of his body, that is, of his mystical body.

(32) *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”*

Those words of Adam, just mentioned by the apostle, are spoken literally of marriage; but they have also a hidden mystical sense in them, relating to the union between Christ and his church, of which the conjugal union between Adam and the mother of us all was a type: though not instituted or appointed by God to signify this, yet it was a kind of natural type, as having a resemblance to it: I speak concerning Christ and the church.

After this, the apostle concludes this part of his discourse with a brief summary of the duty of husbands and wives, (33) *“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”*

"Nevertheless (though there be such a secret mystical sense, yet the plain literal sense concerns you) let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, with such a sincere, peculiar, singular, and prevailing affection as that is which he bears to himself. And the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Reverence consists of love and esteem, which produce a care to please, and of fear, which awakens a caution lest just offence be given. That the wife thus reverence her husband is the will of God and the law of the relation.