

Sacrificial Love in Marriage

I. Desire we have for marital intimacy

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone . . ."

—Genesis 2:18a

1. We long for marital intimacy.
2. We seldom experience this intimacy in marriage.

II. Dilemma we have as being created opposites

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

—Genesis 2:18

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

—Genesis 1:27

1. Opposite in gender

- Communication
- Sexual make-up

2. Opposite in temperament

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." . . . And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

—Genesis 1:26, 31

III. Deception from Satan

1. Create questions about the authority of God's word.

"Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

—Genesis 3:1b

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

—2 Timothy 4:3–4

2. Raise questions about God's goodness.

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

—Genesis 3:4–5

IV. Design for marital intimacy: sacrificial love

This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. —1 John 4:10 (NIV)

1. To love sacrificially, you must know your spouse.
2. To love sacrificially, you must act on that knowledge.

V. Delight in experiencing marital intimacy

“Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.” —Luke 17:33

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” — —1 Corinthians 2:9

1. We were designed to sacrificially love.
2. When we sacrificially love we are most fully like Christ.
3. When we are imitating Christ we are living out His design.
4. When we live out His design we are both most fully satisfied.

“We are most satisfied when He is most glorified.” —John Piper (paraphrased)

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

—Ephesians 3:20–21

Discussion Questions

1. How do you see the connection between sacrifice and love?
2. What areas of “opposite-ness” have challenged you most in your marriage?
3. Thank each other for a time when you saw your spouse loving you sacrificially.
4. Share an area in which you think you could improve in loving your spouse more sacrificially.

Love and Respect in Marriage

I. Sin's distortion of God's design

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.
—Genesis 3:6

1. Eve's misuse of "helping"

"Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." —Genesis 3:16b (NIV)

2. Adam's misuse of "serving"

And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life . . ."
—Genesis 3:17

II. Understanding our fallen tendencies

1. Wired to "help"

2. Wired to "satisfy"

III. Recapturing Eden

1. Be willing to "do your job."

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.
—Ephesians 5:33

2. Ask God to help *you* be the spouse He desires.

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

*And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

—Psalm 139:23–24

3. Embrace the antidote to the fall.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their 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 Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.
— Ephesians 5:22–30

Husbands:

- Pursue your wife.

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

— Luke 19:10

- Lead your wife.

For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church . . .

— Ephesians 5:23a

- Serve your wife.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . .

— Ephesians 5:25

- Lead her spiritually.

. . . and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word . . .

— Ephesians 5:25b–26

- Help her become more radiant.

. . . and to present her to himself as a radiant church . . .

— Ephesians 5:27a (NIV)

Wives:

- Submit to your husband.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

— Ephesians 5:22

- Show your husband respect.

. . . and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

— Ephesians 5:33

- Don't enable sinful behavior.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

— Ephesians 5:22

IV. Seek to cooperate with the purposes of Christ rather than the devil.

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

—1 Peter 5:8

Discussion Questions

1. Wives, finish this sentence: “I don’t feel loved by you when . . .”
Husbands, finish this sentence: “I don’t feel respected by you when . . .”
2. Wives, what specifically can you do to show more respect for your husband?
Husbands, what specifically can you do to express love to your wife more fully in the coming week?