

# Ephesians: What's God Saying to You? What are You Going to Do About It?

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## I. Introduction

God calls the husband to die for his wife. Why can't it be the other way around? And why is it so difficult to die for your wife? Husbands are to love their wives the way Christ loved the Church, but what does that mean in practice, in everyday life? And what does it look like for the husband to lead the marriage; why can't all decisions be 50/50?

## II. Ephesians: What is God Saying to You and What are You Going to Do About It?

### Chapter 5

**5:25-33**, men have tremendous responsibility as husbands: God has charged them with the task of following His example as leader, provider, and protector. Yes, God gave the husband the authority in the marriage, but this means that he's the one called to die not his wife. It also means that he's responsible for his wife's success. And yes, God gave him the final say in the marriage but this means that he must behave like a leader and protector and not repeat Adam's weakness. Although he's the leader and authority in the marriage, he must not exercise it with tyranny, thus, he must check his desire to dominate his wife.

#### Why does the husband have to die for the wife?

*First*, God calls men to die for their wives because He made them to emulate His sacrifice, responsibility, and love as husbands and fathers. That is, God is the Father of creation and therefore holds Himself responsible for our welfare and salvation. And when God created human beings, He made them in His image, which meant they would be like Him and exhibit His characteristics. But He didn't make two males; He made a male and a female because each would portray a different aspect of God. God is leader, provider, and protector but He's also a nurturer. God is at times portrayed as one with motherly qualities, but also as Father and Husband (Deuteronomy 32:11-12; Psalm 91:4; Isaiah 49:15; 54:5; 66:13; Jeremiah 31:32; Ezekiel 16:6-21; Hosea 2:19; Matthew 23:37; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-32; 1 John 3:1). However, God is not female; even the Scriptures that refer to Him as having motherly qualities use masculine pronouns (e.g., Psalm 91:4). Depending on the situation, both God the Father and God the Son exhibit these qualities as they care for us. But there's also a definite hierarchy: God the Father is the authority over the Son (1 Corinthians 11:3). In God there is both authority and submission. And God wanted this emulated by the man and woman, especially in marriage and in the function of the Church. So God determined that the man would play the role of husband and father and the woman the wife and mother. God made the man responsible to be the leader, provider and protector, which is why when something goes wrong with his wife, marriage or family, God blames him not his wife (e.g., God blamed Adam, not Eve, for the fall of mankind, Romans 5:12-14). Additionally, in one sense, both the husband and wife will sacrifice for each other and the family. But as protector, God calls the husband to die for his wife and family, to sacrifice his life for theirs. So when it comes to certain arrows, God expects the man to take the hit not the wife (Numbers 1:1-3).

Second, another giant reason God calls husbands to die for their wives and not the other way around is that there's a direct result connected to the husband's dying: the wife's growth and success. That is, as Jesus is responsible for His wife's growth and success, God holds husbands responsible for their wives' growth and success, Ephesians 5:25-27. Therefore, God calls a husband to place his wife's interests above his own so that he will help her become the best wife she can be whether mother or CEO.

Third, it's not just the husband who is called to die, the wife is also. That is, when God tells the wife to submit to her husband in everything and the husband to die for his wife in everything, He's telling both of them to sacrifice their needs, wants, and desires for the other. Therefore, God is calling both of them to die, to sacrifice their life for the other.

### **Why is it so difficult to die for my wife?**

First, just as the woman has to deal with a curse, so does the man: when God disciplined Adam and Eve after their fall, God told the woman that she would struggle with wanting to dominate her husband. But He also told the man that he would struggle with wanting to dominate his wife (Genesis 3:16). When men don't keep this desire to dominate their wives in check, they will think that being a man is never letting your woman disrespect you, which really means that she never speaks unless spoken to, never interrupts, never gives her opinion unless asked, or does anything else without his permission. This dictator complex will make it impossible for men to die for their wives. The thought of sacrificing for their wives never enters their minds because he's not there to serve her, she's there to serve him.

Second, if you're a weak man, it will make dying for your wife frustrating or even impossible. And weakness comes in many forms. For example, weakness can come through abdication. That is, if a man was taught to be tough physically but never how to sacrifice and be responsible as a servant leader, then as a husband he may be willing to fight anyone on the street, but when it comes to everyday responsibilities like work, finances, and parenting he will check out and let his wife lead the family. This type fails to die for his wife and children and becomes more like a son than a husband. Weakness can also come through fear: if a man was taught by his upbringing to fear speaking up, to fear confrontation, then he will never say anything disagreeable to his wife. The thought of getting into an angry argument terrifies him so he keeps his mouth shut. This type will die for his wife by default, i.e., he'll do everything she wants and says but he'll be frustrated inside because he wants to speak up but won't. Weakness can also come through shutting down: if he's never been taught how to handle his emotions or lead, when his wife begins to lead the marriage, he will be frustrated and angry. But since he doesn't know how to deal with his anger or fix his lack of leadership, he'll just shut down. He's fuming inside but won't say a word. The common denominator in all of these men is that they were never taught how to be men. A man is a leader, provider, and protector who takes responsibility for himself and his family. He is someone who's willing to sacrifice his life for those around him. He's both tough and tender: when the situation calls for toughness, he'll be tough as nails (John 2:13-17); when the situation requires tenderness, he'll be tender as a lamb (Mark 10:13-16).

**What does dying mean, what does it look like in daily life?** At the heart of dying for your wife is love: we are to love our wives as Jesus loved the Church, Ephesians 5:25, and love them as we love ourselves, Ephesians 5:28-29. This means that your wife should feel loved, she should know that you care for her as much as you do for yourself by your actions. Because after all, love is not simply a feeling but an action. Love sacrifices for the one it loves (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a). What does this mean in real life? It means that a husband is willing to take a bullet for his wife if he has to. But more importantly, he takes a bullet for her every day. That is, if your wife wants to talk after you get home from a long day at work, you talk. If she needs help with house chores, you help. If the Lord blessed her with the smarts to pursue a degree and run a business, you support her. Whenever you see that your wife is upset, you find out what it's about and you fix it. When you notice that she wants something that you're not giving her, you give it. Additionally, dying doesn't just mean giving your wife what she wants. The question is, "Will it hurt her, you, your marriage or your family?" If her desire is something that is sinful or will cause damage, then it's time for you to be the protector and show her that what she's asking for is not good. In other words, you're constantly looking for ways to make your wife better, whether it's giving something or withholding something. Your job is to make sure she's the best wife she can be, Ephesians 5:26-27.

**Submitting to your wife doesn't mean giving her the authority**, some husbands are weak and when they hear God say, "Die for your wife," they take it and run with it, not because they want to obey God and die for their wives but because they're afraid to lead, or afraid of confrontation, or they don't know how to lead and take responsibility, etc. This is not dying; this is abdicating the responsibility God gave you as a leader, provider, and protector. It is what Adam did in the Garden and it was disastrous for the entire human race (Genesis 3:1-6). How do you know when you're dying as a servant leader as God defines it instead of using it as an excuse to be a weak husband? You may convince yourself that you're a servant leader who's leading from behind. Don't be deceived; leading from behind is not leading at all. If someone's in front of you, you're not leading. So, ask yourself, "Who's leading this marriage?" If you're playing assistant to your wife, if she's the one setting the plans for the family and executing them and you're there to help her, then the roles have switched. If you're constantly asking for permission from your wife before you make a decision, the roles have switched. If you can't do anything without first checking with your wife, the roles have switched. This doesn't mean that you're going to make decisions without her, regardless of what she thinks; your role is not dictator. But neither is marriage 50/50 or 100/100; you are the authority and the final decision and responsibility falls on you, Ephesians 5:24. However, your decisions must take her into account because God commands you to put her interests above your own and because God gave you a helper (Genesis 2:18) who will sometimes see things you can't and thus help you avoid foolish mistakes (Genesis 21:8-12).

### III. Conclusion

*...submitting to one another in the fear of God.*