



New Covenant Life

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Grace Christian Fellowship

The New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (NASB)



Sea of Galilee (This was very close to where our Lord gave the greatest sermon ever preached on New Covenant living)

It has been our experience that there is a great need within the Church (the Body of Christ) to receive a fresh and powerful revelation of the glory, might and promises of the New Covenant. So many believers are trying to live in the New Covenant with Old Covenant thinking, principles and practices. However, it is our prayer that God might use this newsletter to shed light on aspects of New Covenant living for believers so that we all might enter into the fullness of what God has for us in this side of eternity.

A Sweet Aroma to the Lord

Written by JP Le Roux

“After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matt. 2:11 NASB)

Matthew chapter two is such a rich chapter of the Word of God and deserves much meditation and study. If I had time I would have loved to discuss so much more in this particular chapter of this Gospel. However, I feel the Holy Spirit is pressing upon my heart to highlight a specific and very precious truth in the verse above. My prayer is that the Lord would powerfully speak to you through His Word by His Spirit!!!

I assume that many of us who have been walking with the Lord for some time and have had the blessing of listening to many anointed teaching ministries have heard already so much about this chapter and maybe even this verse, I remember one of the first teachings I ever heard after I got born again was on this chapter and this verse. The teaching beautifully highlighted the prophetic message in the gifts that the wise men were presenting to our Lord. The gift of gold highlighted that this Child is a King! The gift of frankincense highlighted that this Child is a Priest (High Priest)! And the gift of myrrh highlighted that this Child was to be anointed for burial (He was to die)!! Gold was often given to a King as tribute (1 Kg. 10:10; 2 Chron. 1:115, 9:20), frankincense was what priests used in the service of the tabernacle (Ex. 30:34), and myrrh was what people were anointed with before they were buried (Jn. 19:39). A powerful and beautiful prophetic message!!

However, are these gifts only speaking to us about the nature and ministry of Christ? Does these gifts not prophetically also teach us something of our sweet, simple and most precious devotion to Christ? I have always heard about these gifts teaching us who Christ is, but I have never heard anyone talk about how these gifts reveal to us the kind of devotion we must have to Christ. You see

when I look at this act of giving I see a sacrifice that is a sweet smelling aroma to God. Let us look at the gifts again.

I think we would all agree that gold is the most valuable gift of the three gifts. In the Temple it was a symbol of a number of things, but at the most basic understanding it represented what was the most valuable to the Lord. Gold is what is best!! And here we see the wise men giving Christ what is most valuable to them; they are giving their best to Christ. Can you say that your devotion to Christ is like gold? Is what you give to Christ what is most valuable to you? Is our Lord an afterthought in your life? Just a safety net for difficult times? O beloved may it never be!!! Christ gave everything for us!! God did not spare His Son but delivered Him up (Rom. 8:32; 1 Jn. 4:9)!! Did the Father not give us His very best? Did Christ not lay down His very life (Jn. 10:18; 1 Jn. 3:16)? O Lord have mercy on us!! We pray that our devotion to Christ will be as gold, the best, the most valuable and most treasured!!

The second gift that the wise men gave our Lord was frankincense and as I already noted above this incense were used by the priests in the Tabernacle (Ex. 30:34). If this gift reveals to us of Christ's ministry then would it not also be true that it reveals to us something of our ministry? If Christ came as One who was completely submitted to His heavenly Father then should we not come to Christ as one completely submitted to Him? If this gift speaks to us about Christ's service to God then does it not also speak to us about our service to Christ? Christian, I want you to know that there is no devotion to Christ without obeying Christ!! Is faith not dead without works (Jas. 2:14-26). How can we say we love Him but not obey Him (Jn. 14:15, 23). A simple and sweet devotion to Christ will always include serving and obeying Christ. Is your devotion to Christ mere words? Do you say Amen and Hallelujah to Christ's service and obedience to His Father, and yet do not follow His example? Do you cry on Sunday morning during worship when singing of your devotion

to the Lord, but when He asks you to do something on Monday you ignore Him? If so pray to God: O Lord change me O God!! Make my devotion to Christ rich with frankincense!!! Make me a worshipper O God!!

The last and final gift that the wise men gave to our Lord is myrrh. It is clear that myrrh speaks of death in the Scriptures. Now if this gift prophetically speaks to us of Christ's death on a cross, should it not then speak to us about our death on our cross? As Christ said to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane "not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39), should it not be the cry of those who call upon the Name of the Lord with a pure heart? You see my dear Christian, devotion to Christ is a surrender of self, a giving of self and a denying of self. There is no devotion to Christ without dying daily to every single one of our fleshly desires.

You see my dear brother and sister here we must count the cost! True devotion to Christ is costly!! It is very costly!! Did not Christ pay an enormous price that we could not pay ourselves (Matt. 18:21-35)? Are you not bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20)? So how is it then that your devotion to Christ is so cheap? Can you see that your devotion to Christ is costing you daily? Let me be clear my dear Christian there is no Christianity without counting the cost (Matt. 10:32-39; Lk. 14:25-33). Lord we pray for Grace to lay down all at your feet everyday!!! Lord we know Christ is most worthy of our purest devotion. Please Lord!! Please Lord!!! We ask for grace as abundant as the ocean!!!

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:6 NASB)

Testimonies for Jesus

Claudia Ridley

"What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me? I shall lift up the cup of salvation And call upon the name of the LORD"
– Psalm 116:12-13

I was born in Brazil in a family where my father followed Spiritism and my mother was an atheist. Up to my teenage years I remember many occasions when my father tried to explain to us about Spiritism and take us to some meetings, but there was always a conflict at home as my mother found it hard to agree with it.

By the age of 13 my social life began and when I was about 18 I was already tired of partying, drinking and all that follows with them, and I started asking questions about life, such as "what is the meaning of life?" and "is there anything else in life or is that all we get?". So, I started studying Spiritism and taking it seriously.

I remember times at the table when it was only mum and I, and I tried to tell her about God and a spiritual life. It never made sense to me that there was no God as I had seen many spiritual manifestations. However, with all these spiritual things happening around me, nothing really impressed me, although I believed them. I was truly just looking for peace in my soul.

I did charity work with orphans and disabled children just to find out that I was even more miserable, and I had nothing tangible to give to them apart from food and medicine, I had no hope, neither love in me. I did not realise the state of my soul, but I was depressed, and I had no desire to enjoy the pleasures that the world had to offer me anymore. At that point in life I came to Australia. It was October 2011, I had the purpose of studying English and then later to do my masters in actuarial science.

In my second week in Brisbane I met Ben and at that stage I had lost hope in relationships, due to previous relationships, and had no interest to get involved with anyone. However, we started seeing each other for about a month before he left to Afghanistan with the Army for about 6 months.

During that time my English improved and Ben and I kept in contact. At some point, Ben mentioned to me that he had an encounter with God and that had changed his life completely. I could not understand, but I thought I should support him even if we only end up being friends.

When he came back to Australia the only thing he wanted to talk about was Jesus and God. I was happy to listen to him as I appreciated meaningful conversations, but deep in my heart I always thought I knew better than him.

A few months passed, and Ben found the relationship a stumbling block as he was looking for a Christian wife. At the same time, I wanted to support him and knew it likely meant breaking up the relationship. On one hand I knew I was going to lose something, but on the other hand I appreciated his commitment and honesty, as he was not playing the hypocrite.

There was a night when he took me out for dinner, as he had made up his mind to break up with me. However, God showed him that he had not yet heard from me what I believed. As I started explaining about Spiritism and reincarnation, he asked simple questions such as "when does it start? And when does it end? What is the purpose of following it?" and though I was so devoted and clever in my mind, I had no answers for those questions. Then he followed by "who is the person of Jesus?" and last "why did Jesus die on the cross?" And with all my studies and intelligence I had nothing to say about those things. So that night he shared the Gospel with me, from beginning to end and when he finished I thought to myself, "wow, I never heard something so beautiful as this", I could not explain the power I felt especially when he talked about Jesus being the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. I then asked him where he got this information from and he said: "from the Bible". At that moment I thought the Bible was a made-up book to steal everyone's money, then I thought "poor Ben, he is deceived, I will read the Bible and show him he is wrong", but truly inside of me there

was such a desire to find out more about what he shared with me.

So, the next morning I started reading the Bible and I remembered a Christian friend from Brazil, who I had been in touch with, who told me to start from the New Testament and pray before reading that God would show me what He wanted me to know. So, I did. Although I despised the Bible I remember that Ben and Amanda had said that the Bible is the Word of God, so I thought "I better not miss one comma" and then I went through the genealogy in Matthew word by word thinking "this is so boring" until it started talking about Jesus. I could not believe there was so much about Jesus in the Bible. The way He spoke with people, everything He did, I could not wait to read the next line and so I found myself reading it for four hours on the first day.

I was studying 8 hours a day for my Masters and I had just missed half of the day. But I really wanted to know about these questions to which I had no answers. So, I set apart four

hours a day to read the Bible and on my fourth day God revealed Himself to me. He showed me the reason my life was a mess and that I was righteously and justly deserving of hell. On that day I cried out to God in my room: "I thought I knew You. I want to know You and I want to follow You". There was the beginning of a new life as I was born again. In less than six months Ben and I got married and now together we have been walking with God for more than five years. There is much more I could talk about with regards to my Saviour's grace and mercy in my life, but I hope you too will know the surpassing riches of His grace and love that He has in store for you if you just let Him lead the way.

"But you are... a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" – 1 Peter 2:9

Wisdom From Saints

A Word From Ravenhill

Pentecost At Any Cost¹

Some simpleton, trying to fill in the Grand Canyon with a shovel, would evoke gales of laughter and would suffer scorn and unbearable vituperation. No man will ever fill in that hole - not even with any army of bulldozers (never mind a one-man shovel operation).

We Christians are a "holey" people. There are holes everywhere in and about our theology. There is a big hole or gap between what we read in the Book and what we practice. There is also a chasm in our church life. We seem at this hour to be as far removed from apostolic Christianity as the pope is from marriage. We are strangers from the commonwealth of the divine power of Pentecost. We are aliens to that city-moving enduement that was known to our spiritual fathers of the first decade in Pentecost.

I remember on one occasion using a tin of well-advertised paint. The "fast-color, quick-drying, permanent-finish" selling line hooked me. But my experiment was a flop. Was the paint at fault? No, the painter was the transgressor. He did not read the directions, and so the results could not come out right. For an outpouring of the Spirit let us as Christians go back to the Bible directions.

Even before a return to the Bible, we might ask a searing question: "Do we want another Reformation in the Biblical style?" A second not-too-easy question is this: "Do we really want a Pentecostal visitation of the Spirit that will shatter our status quo spiritually, socially, and economically?" (Let me inject a stop signal here: Unless you can answer yes to both these questions, don't pass on.)

Our investigation into "Pentecost at any cost" is not merely to find an answer to empty pews nor yet to solve that preacher's headache, the Sunday night congregation. It is not merely a short-cut to getting our



particular church or denomination on its feet. The answer to that problem is simple - get it on its knees. Our rediscovery of Pentecost may bring these several changes within a church; or on the other hand, it is possible that the new wine might burst the old bottles.

If we want to, we can get back to Pentecost. But the road up this hill of blessing is steep. (I am assuming here that my readers believe the Bible to be the inspired, infallible, imperishable Word of God, and that it is no mere theological cliché to say, 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever' (Heb. 13:8)).

The first hurdle blocking this road to spiritual recovery is this:

The Price of Reproach

Even suggest tarrying and right off some will dub us Pentecostals (as if that matters). Or, we would get jerking thumbs and out-of-the-side-of-the-mouth comments like this one: "They are trying to be super-spiritual" - an appendage we all would like at the judgment seat of Christ. Or some might

¹ Ravenhill, Leonard. "Pentecost At Any Cost." No pages. Cited 29 April 2018. Online: <http://www.ravenhill.org/pentecostcost.htm>

even term us "lazy" for escaping work for some period. Or, if, with our fetters off, we leap for joy-in heart if not on our feet-then out from the critics would come the shattering phrase, "They are drunk" We could hardly take that!

Another reproach might be the fact that the manner of the Holy Spirit and His method of directing worship would be so anti-orthodox that the unmoved believers might be again heard to say, "They are unlearned and ignorant men " The flesh hates to be slighted intellectually by the intellectuals. Can we pay the price of reproach?

Well then, if the reproach is not too great, if the price is not too high, if the sacrifice is not too involved, and if the stigma is not too humiliating, we can consider the next step to spiritual recovery.

The Price of Disruption

"Of course we do not have to tarry these days," say the expositors, "because," they add, "this is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit." Dispensationally (if one may dare to use that often-abused word) they are right. But I still hold that we need to tarry.

First, take notice that this tarrying would mean a shattering of our own little program. The Holy Spirit is no one's errand boy. The Holy Spirit does not move at our beck and call. He cannot be slighted by frail human will without serious consequence. For spiritual recovery He must be obeyed. Only let calamity come, and we will all want to be spiritual. Stock market addicts miss their shrine of Mammon when there is personal or domestic calamity or a national day of prayer (called usually when there is no other way out). A "rat in a trap" turns many to prayer. But do we pray when we are not in a trap?

We need to remember that wars always bring disruption. In London, England, just after the second world war, I saw from the outside balcony of St. Paul's Cathedral an ugly slab of concrete far below. The upper crust of that slab was thirty feet thick, the guide told me. Beneath it and in comparative safety, Winston Churchill, his cabinet, and his military advisors, spent many a sleepless night plotting military strategy in an attempt to out-maneuver a

crafty foe. Especially was this disruption true when England was "going it alone," and Hitler's flesh-pounding juggernauts were only twenty miles across the English Channel.

While the top brass were thus engaged, the lesser fry were fire-watching. That meant each man had a certain night that in pouring rain or in hail from falling shrapnel, he would walk the street and if need be put out incendiary bombs. It was a risky task. But here was compulsion to duty as well as a bit of the disruption that all war brings. In the holy war against the devil and his works, can we be choosy in our obedience? Can we pray when we like? Can we seek the fulness of the Spirit when we are so disposed? No! If we are aware that now is the time for God to do a new thing, then precedents will be shattered.

This brings us to another hurdle, the third:

The Price of Waiting

We need this waiting to get it clear in our minds that Holy Ghost visitation would not have to fit into our preconceived theological orbit. We need the waiting:

- for humiliation and for time for a confession of our too-long-a-time satisfaction with our own works.
- to get our spiritual eyes refocused on the holiness of God and the lostness of men.
- to linger until we have a broken and contrite spirit.
- to prove we can master the claims of this materialistic age in which we live.
- to hear again the living voice of the living God.
- to show our utter disregard for our own efforts and our complete dependence upon the living God for deliverance in this sin-dominated age.
- to convince our skeptical friends that we love the will of God, that we long for the favor of God, and that we seek the power of God with more zeal than we put into our business lives and with greater hunger than we have for food.
- for a sorrowful confession of sin and pleading for cleansing through the blood of Christ. In the divine presence, vows would be made to put wrongs

right and to remain submissive to God's revealed will. I believe that then the Spirit would fall.

Is the fire and fervor of the early church as revealed in the Acts of the Apostles the norm for the church of Jesus Christ? We believe it is. Jesus came that we might have life "more abundantly," life with glow and with flow and with overflow.

The Spirit does not discriminate as to a man's position in a church. The Spirit falls on a Saul and makes him a Paul and an apostle. The Spirit endues a Philip, and he turns the city of Samaria upside down and ransacks the devil's kingdom.

Supernatural evidence has accompanied every revival. The external miracles have been greater in some operations than in others. But - and this is the core of the thing - signs and wonders were done; the rationalists and materialists were stirred, and at times silenced.

To revival there is peril and pain - pain for the birth of revival, pain from the scorn of others while revival is in progress, and pain when the **fire** of revival dies down.

Repeatedly the question has been asked, "Why does revival come in a blaze, but to the delight of the critics soon sputter and die out?" The answer to that question could be one or two of these things (at times maybe both): **First:** Ignorance could quench the Spirit - an inability to hear the voice of the Lord for the next move.

Second: Disobedience - this seems the most likely thing to douse the flame that seeks to consume all the dross. There might be other causes such as laziness to follow the close schedule that the Spirit demands, or there might be smug satisfaction that there is now some "life."

Let us remind ourselves again that the early church "moved." In moving,

something or somebody must be left behind. The modern Ananias and Sapphira will find the pace too hot and the price too high. To **keep** the fire of revival burning, we would have to meet together

- daily for prayer and praise. This is what the church in Acts did (Acts 2:42-46).
- daily for breaking of bread. This the early church did.
- daily for prayer. This was their pattern in the early church.
- in the harmony of the Spirit. This was the glow of the first church.

This stringent schedule would be the death of many of our flimsy and unproductive patterns of life. How easily we Christians move along in the light of the lostness of men and their gambling with the certainty of eternal destruction unless they hear and believe. Sloth has seeped into our endeavors. The mesmerism of materialism has almost completely clogged the channel of blessing. We stand condemned.

Almost every Christian without exception knows better than to live at his present standard of spirituality. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." There is only one way for the church to operate - God's way. The Bible is the blueprint of this way.

Here, then, is the way back to Pentecost and on to glory!

Quick, in a moment, infinite
for ever,
Send an arousal better than
I pray;
Give me a grace upon the
faint endeavor,
Souls for my hire and
Pentecost today!

For the Disciples of Jesus

Proving God's Perfect Will

Written by Zac Poonen²

When faced with an issue concerning which we are unsure as to whether it is God's will or not, it is good for us to ask ourselves twelve questions. As we answer these questions honestly, it will become increasingly clear to us what the will of God is.

- Is it contrary to any of the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, or to the spirit of the New Testament, as far as I know? (2 Tim 3:16,17)
- Is it something I can do with a clear conscience? (1 Jn.3:21)
- Is it something I can do for the glory of God? (1 Cor.10:31)
- Is it something I can do in fellowship with Jesus? (Col.3:17)
- Can I ask God to bless me as I do it? (2 Cor.9:8)
- Will my doing it blunt my spiritual edge in any

way? (2 Tim.2:15)

- Will it be spiritually profitable and edifying, to the best of my knowledge? (1 Cor.6:12; 10:23)
- Would I be happy if I were found doing it at the moment when Jesus returns to earth? (1 Jn.2:28)
- What do wiser and more mature brothers think about it? (Prov.11:14; 15:22; 24:6)
- Will my doing it bring dishonour to God's Name or ruin my testimony, if others know about it? (Rom.2:24; 2 Cor.8:21)
- Will my doing it cause others to stumble, if they know about it? (Rom.14:13; 1 Cor.8:9)
- Do I feel free in my spirit to do it? (1 Jn.2:27)

Look up the Scripture references and meditate on them.

² Poonen, Zac. "Proving God's Perfect Will." No pages. Cited 27 April 2018. Online: <https://www.cfcindia.com/article/proving-gods-perfect-will>

A Word For Families

What Does It Mean to Nourish and Cherish Your Wife?

Written by Rick Thomas³

Did you ever play the hiding game where you hid something from your friends, and it was their job to find it? We played this game often as children. I would hide something, and my brothers would search for what I hid. If they got close to the object, I would say something like, "You're getting warm" or "You're getting warmer," if they were getting real close, or "You're red hot" if they were nearly on top of it. Of course, if they were moving away from the object, I would say something like, "You're getting cold," which was their clue that they were going in the wrong direction.

Are You Getting Warm?

I was thinking about this recently during a counseling session where I was illustrating what Paul said in Ephesians 5:29. Paul was counseling the Ephesians to "warm" their wives.

"For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church." – Paul

The word nourish means to grow, and the word cherish means to warm. Paul was teaching them that a God-centered, biblical husband is one who "nourishes (grows) and cherishes (warms)" his wife. To illustrate my point to the husband that I was counseling, I drew a distinction between "warm and cold" by writing out specific attitudes and actions that a husband could use to either warm his wife or push her out in the cold, so to speak. Below are the word choices I shared with this husband, plus a few others I've thought about since our conversation. You can print this article and circle the attitudes and actions that best represent how you think about and treat your wife. For an extra bonus, you can print this for your wife and ask her to circle the ones you excel in and ask her to highlight the things where you need improvement. Your wife might

have a different perspective than you do. I typically have a higher view of myself than what my wife does. When I counseled men, I've seen a similar pattern. If I advised a husband without his wife in the room, he tended to give me a better assessment of himself and his marriage. Then his wife came to the next meeting and presented a strikingly different perspective. Her perspective was valuable. No one knows you better than your wife. More than likely she knows you better than you do. Though what I'm asking you to do here might sound like a dare or even manipulation, it's not: if you're serious about your marriage, ask your wife to assess you. This interaction could be one of those pivotal points in your marriage because (1) you can model humility, (2) she can exhibit grace, and (3) God can be glorified.

To Warm Your Wife

Gentleness	Kindness	Romance
Humility	Forgiveness	Respecting
Talking	Edifying	Sacrifice
Transparency	Esteeming	Cross-centered
Joyful	Grace-filled	Friendly
Affection	Cherishing	Serving
Acceptance	Discipling	Providing
Modeling	Leadership	Loving
Agreeable	Dependable	Honorable
Mature	Fun	Patient
Honoring	Confession	Caring
Encourager		

Just as there is a "warm list," there is also a "chill list." If a man is not warming his wife, he is cooling the marriage by his attitude and behaviors toward his wife. There is no neutrality in any marriage. As for the list below, I have done nearly every one of them in our marriage. Though our relationship is amazing now, it was not always this way. There was a time when I did not like Lucia, and she

³ Thomas, Rick. "What Does It Mean to Nourish and Cherish Your Wife?" No pages. Cited 29 April 2018. Online: <https://rickthomas.net/what-does-it-mean-to-nourish-and-cherish-your-wife/>

viscerally and physically responded to my sinful attitudes and behaviors toward her. There is a direct correlation between how a man thinks and responds to his wife and the state of his marriage. If he likes her, the marriage will be heading in a good direction. If he does not, the marriage is on hard times. A man cannot fake genuine gratitude for his wife. If he has it, he will be exhibiting the character traits and behaviors in the “warm list.” He cannot do otherwise. Her radiance is a clue to the warmth she experiences from her husband: she will feel and show his affection. If he does not have it, he will be exhibiting the character traits and behaviors below. And like a dance partner, his wife will be reacting to his poor leadership and bad attitude.

To Chill Your Wife

Harsh	Unkind	Hatred
Belittling	Anger	Selfishness
Rejection	Devalue	Passivity
Disrespect	Accusing	Hostile
Self-sufficient	Individualistic	Loner
Unforgiveness	Criticalness	Disapproving
Apathy	Abuse	Bitterness
Hypocrisy	Boasting	Silence
Proud	Coarse	Porn
Self-righteous	Blames	Cynical
Lying	Immodest	Suspicious
Disagreeable	Stubborn	

How did you do? Are you warm and getting warmer or are you cold and getting colder? There are some who may interject, “But you don’t know my wife. If you lived with her, you would not pass this test as well.” I hear you. I do understand what you’re saying. As noted, there was a time I did not like my wife either, and I could have maintained a similar position. What that means is that I could justify my stubbornness not to love my wife because she was not meeting my expectations. The real question is, “Do you hear what you are saying?” You’re saying you do not have to do for your wife what Christ did for you—assuming you’re a Christian. You’re saying it was okay for you to be unlovable to Christ, but it is not good for your wife to be unlovable to you (Romans 5:8). You and I do not have the biblical right to withhold nourishing and cherishing from our wives because they are not meeting our expectations. That is another gospel the Bible does not condone.

It took me two years in my closet, praying, asking God to give me a renewed affection for Lucia. It was not as easy as repenting and moving on to the next thing. My heart was selfish, angry, and stubborn. It took many hours of time before God to get my heart realigned to His gospel.

And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? – Matthew 18:33

Imagine the Savior saying, “If you behave in a manner that is acceptable to me, I will save you.” Oh, my. We all would go to hell. To withhold nourishing and cherishing from your wife is saying, “If she behaved more acceptably, I would be more inclined to love her the way Paul is suggesting.” Paul would never condone such an adulteration of the gospel. He tied the marriage to the gospel and expected us husbands to model the gospel that he proclaimed. His expectations for covenantal partners is to bring the marriage into gospel focus.

Gospel Focused Marriage

This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. – Ephesians 5:32

The primary person Paul was talking about in this text was Christ. He had Christ and His relationship to His church in mind. He is teaching us about the love of Christ and how that active love changed us (Ephesians 5:25-26). Then Paul transitions by drawing an analogy regarding the husband and wife relationship. He is telling us husbands to love our wives similarly to the way Christ loves His church. Of course, part of the way Christ loves His church is through His ongoing nourishing and cherishing—Christ does not hate His body. If you are a Christian, you have been the benefactor of the Savior’s loving activity. Through the attitudes and behaviors of God’s work in your life, you are growing and changing. Sanctification is what God does for us because we are part of His body. He sees it as His job to mature His body. In like manner, your wife is part of who you are. You and your wife are one flesh. To dislike your flesh is insanity. It leads to suicide or, in this case, it leads to divorce—the aggravated amputation of

the flesh from the body. If you nourish and cherish your wife, she will respond to your practical, loving care, similarly to how the church responds to Christ. Your wife was wired to respond to you, not to be repulsed by you. And through your careful nourishing and cherishing she will grow and mature. While it's true that she can grow in Christ in spite of you, that is not the way things ought to be. You are not called to hate your flesh, but to nourish and cherish it.

Wife Reflects Husband's Care

If your wife is nourished and cherished according to the "warm list," her growth will be apparent. A wife is a reflection of her husband's care. Though he can be impressive in his vocation and many accolades can come his way, the real test is the "reflection" his wife manifests. Think with me for a moment about Christ being the "big man on (some other) campus" while His church grows bitter and distant by the day. That would not make sense. Similarly, it does not make sense for a husband to seek other interests elsewhere while distancing himself from his wife. Some women married for ten years or more have that wilting, withdrawn, and degenerative look to them. Their husbands have been doing other things, and the nourishing and cherishing these women were supposed to receive went toward other pursuits. These wives are wilting on the vine, a wilting that is different from external beauty. Anybody can paint a barn and change a few boards, but what you have is still quite evident—a decaying structure. What I'm talking about is an internal beauty that you cannot disguise. Many externally beautiful women in this world are spiritually rotting. There is a lonely, lost, and worn feel to them. They don't glow no matter what color they dye their hair or how many times they Botox or even if they bought every pair of shoes and every dress on Fifth Avenue. They are spiritually withering. It's a sad thing to see. You can look at their wedding pictures and see the life and hope that radiated from their faces. Then you see them ten years later and the inward beauty from their special day is gone.

Imperishable Beauty

The most beautiful woman you'll ever see is

not a twenty-something hottie, but a sixty-something beauty who has been nourished and cherished by her husband. She glows. She has something Hollywood cannot replicate. She has imperishable beauty.

Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. — 1 Peter 3:3-4

Husband, you are the caretaker of this kind of beauty. If you have been married for at least five years, the imperishable beauty of your wife should be evident, even if only in embryonic form. If you have been married for ten years or more, who you are as a person and what you have done to your wife are evident, as shown by what your wife reflects through your nourishing, cherishing care. The Doctrine of Progressive Sanctification is the context in which the Savior operates on Christians. The job of the Savior is to remove every spot and wrinkle and any such thing that defiles His church. Husband, you are called to do similarly to your wife. Your covenant of marriage is the context in which you nourish and cherish (mature) your wife. Is she getting warmer?

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. — Ephesians 5:25-27

Call to Action

- Husband, work through the two lists above, making notes where you believe you are excelling and where you need to improve.
- Have your wife do the same thing.
- Compare your list with her list and talk about why you both answered the way you did.
- Take the notes you both made and share with a couple you trust, asking them to help you.



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