

YOU HAD BETTER LOVE THE ONE YOU'VE GOT

Jim Gaylor was a friend of mine during the time when we lived in Auburn, Alabama. We frequently had lunch together and often I would meet him at his office and we would go to lunch from there. Often I would have to wait a few minutes outside his office and that gave occasion for me to converse with his young secretary and hear some of her conversations with others. Over a period of time I became somewhat irritated with this young woman. She had been married less than a year and yet I heard her, on several occasions, complaining about her husband:

- a. "He's not romantic enough"
- b. "He's not ambitious enough"
- c. "He's got some irritating habits"
- d. And finally, she just came out and said: "I just don't love him. I thought I did, but I don't."

When I heard her say, "I just don't love him. I thought I did, but I don't" I decided it was time for me to speak my mind. And my response to her went like this:

- a. "You seem to think it's OK to criticize your husband to other people"
- b. "You seem to think it's OK to decide that you don't love him"
- c. "You seem to think it's OK to say you don't love him"
- d. "But it's not OK ... it's shameful"

Some people have bought into the idea that you ought to express whatever you're feeling ... "just let it all hang out" ... say whatever you feel.

- a. But ...
 - ▶ **Prov 29:11 ~ "A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise man holds them back."**
- b. Think about it:
 - ▶ Even if you felt that way, would you tell other people, "I don't love my children. I thought I would, but I don't."
 - ▶ Would you ever tell your children: "I just don't love you."
 - No.
 - Why not? Because it is not acceptable to feel that way or say that you feel that way ... it's shameful.
 - + Nobody would have any respect for you. You would be condemned by everyone.
- c. It should not be acceptable to feel that way or say that about your husband or wife either.
 - ▶ And it most certainly should not be acceptable to act that way toward a husband or wife.
 - ▶ I can assure you it's not acceptable to God or God-fearing people.

When someone tells me, "I don't love my husband anymore," I say ...

- a. "Are you going to repent?"
- b. "You better start loving him."
- c. "You'll love him, or you'll be lost!"

In the sermon this morning, there is one thought I want to try to impress upon your mind: YOU HAD BETTER LOVE THE ONE YOU'VE GOT (not just keep her, but love her ... not just stay with him, but love him).

1. You had better love the one you've got -- God commands it.

God commands husbands to love their wives.

- a. **Col 3:19 ~ "Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them."**
- b. **Eph 5:25-33 ~ "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ... 28 So husbands ought to love their own 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 the Lord does the church. ... 31 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall**

become one flesh.' ... 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

God commands wives to love their husbands.

- a. Tit 2:1-4 ~ "But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; 3 the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things-- 4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,"

The same God who commands you to love your neighbor ... and love your enemy ... commands that you love your husband ... and He commands that you love your wife

- a. Matt 5:43-46 ~ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"

"Love" is a decision, a commitment ... so it can be commanded.

- a. W. E. Vine: "Christian love . . . is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all (Rom 15:2), and works no ill to any (Rom 13:8-10); love seeks opportunity to do good (Gal 6:10)."
- b. This *agape* love, according to the Abbott-Smith lexicon, means "to feel and exhibit esteem and goodwill to a person."
- c. Think about it:
 - ▶ Deut 7:6-9 says God "set His love" on the children of Israel.
 - "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. 7 The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ... 9 Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;"
 - It was a decision to love . . . a commitment to love.
 - ▶ And God commands that you make that same decision and that same commitment to your husband and your wife.
 - ▶ He commands you to set your love on your husband ... and He commands you to set your love on your wife.
- d. You can love your husband ... and you must.
 - ▶ You can love your wife ... and you must.

The love that God commands you to have for your husband or wife is ...

- a. a love that behaves according to Paul's description of love in 1Cor 13:4-8
 - ▶ NRSV: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends."
 - Remember: If you cannot, or will not, love others (especially your husband or wife) in this way, your religion is worthless.
 - + 1Cor 13:1-3 ~ "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,

but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”

- b. a love that behaves according to Paul’s admonition in **Php 2:3,4**.
 - ▶ “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition (selfishness, NASB) or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”
- c. a love that behaves according to Paul’s teaching in **1Cor 7:3-5**.
 - ▶ “Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”
- d. a love that behaves according to Paul’s command in **Eph 5:25-33**.
 - ▶ “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ... 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh (see v31b), but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. ... 31 ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ ... 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

2. You had better love the one you’ve got -- you promised that you would.

Do you remember those promises/vows you made at your wedding?

- a. *Ken, Do you take this woman to be your lawful, wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, until death do you part? And do you promise to love, honor, and cherish her, in sickness as in health, in prosperity as in adversity, and keep yourself for her and her only, as long as you both shall live?*
 - ▶ *Barbie, Do you take this man to be your lawful, wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, until death do you part? And do you promise to love, honor, and cherish him, in sickness as in health, in prosperity as in adversity, and keep yourself for him and him only, as long as you both shall live?*
- b. And notice the very beginning part of the wedding vows: “Do you take this woman to be your lawful, wedded wife?” ... and ... “Do you take this man to be your lawful, wedded husband?”
 - ▶ Don’t come along later saying: “I was too young” ... “I was an old fool” ... “I was lonely” ... “I thought he had money” ... “I thought he was really going to make something of himself” ... “I thought I loved her, but I didn’t”
 - ▶ The young Shulamite woman in the Song of Solomon had it right when she said of her beloved: “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song of Sol 2:16).
 - ▶ You say, “He’s not the man I thought he was” ... and ... “Things haven’t worked out the way I thought they would.”
 - ▶ God says: Love him anyway. He is yours now. He belongs to you.
 - Those children are yours ... even adopted children. PERIOD. END OF STORY.
 - And that man is your man ... and that woman is your woman. PERIOD. END OF STORY.
 - + Your marriage is like the Garden of Eden ... it’s just you and your wife. There is nobody else.

God expects you to keep your promises ... He requires that you keep your promises.

- a. **Num 30:2-4 ~ “If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds**

out of his mouth. 3 Or if a woman makes a vow to the LORD, and binds herself by some agreement while in her father's house in her youth, 4 and her father hears her vow and the agreement by which she has bound herself, and her father holds his peace, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement with which she has bound herself shall stand."

- ▶ Remember: Marriage is a covenant ... a covenant where both parties vow to each other before God.
 - Mal 2:14 ~ "And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive *it* with goodwill from your hands. 14 Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant."
- b. Deut 23:21-23 ~ "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. 22 But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. 23 That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth."
- c. Psa 15:1-5 ~ "**LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?** 2 He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; 3 He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; 4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; **He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;** 5 He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved."

God holds you to your promise ... even in an "arranged marriage" where you had no choice in the matter ... even in a marriage entered into under false pretences.

- a. Look at the example of Jacob and Leah.
 - ▶ Gen 29:16-20 ~ "Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance. 18 Now **Jacob loved Rachel**; so he said, 'I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.' 19 And Laban said, 'It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.' 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her."
 - ▶ Gen 29:31-35 ~ "**When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.** 32 So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, 'The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.' 33 Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.' And she called his name Simeon. 34 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.' Therefore his name was called Levi. 35 And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'Now I will praise the LORD.' Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing."

3. You had better love the one you've got -- your children deserve it.

Your children deserve to be brought up in a home that is permanent, and where they can feel secure in the love their parents have for each other and for them, and where commitments are honored and fulfilled.

Your children deserve to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4), but that cannot happen in a home where the father does not love his wife and/or the mother does not love her husband.

- a. You cannot bring up your children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" when your children see that you cannot even practice the second greatest commandment (the commandment to love others as you love yourself) toward your own husband or wife.

- b. Your children don't have to know **1Cor 13:1-3** to know that your religion is worthless if it doesn't cause you to love your own husband or wife, and other people, in the way you should.

If your religion doesn't work at home, it doesn't work ... and your children know that.

- a. And your inability, or unwillingness, to sustain an environment of genuine Christian love in your home may very well become a stumblingblock to your children.
 - ▶ **Jas 3:16 ~ "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."**
 - ▶ **Matt 18:6-7 ~ "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"**

Fathers, your children deserve for you to be the best father you can be.

- a. But you cannot possibly be the father you ought to be if you are not the husband you ought to be.

Mothers, your children deserve for you to be the best mother you can be.

- a. But you cannot possibly be the mother you ought to be if you are not the wife you ought to be.

4. You had better love the one you've got -- or you could cause your husband to lose his soul (or, you could cause your wife to lose her soul).

Jesus teaches that if you divorce your wife for a reason other than sexual immorality on her part, you cause her to commit adultery.

- a. **Matt 5:32 ~ "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."**
- b. And if she does get involved in adultery and never truly repents she will lose her soul.

The apostle Paul teaches that if you withhold affection and sexual gratification from your husband you make him vulnerable to Satan's temptations ... and if he gives in to those temptations he could lose his soul.

- a. **1Cor 7:1-5 ~ "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. 3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."**

Paul also teaches that a father who mistreats his children may cause them to become "discouraged" (**Col 3:21**)

- a. It certainly stands to reason, then, that a husband who mistreats his wife may cause her to become "discouraged."
- b. She may give up on ever being able to please her husband and that may lead her to give up on trying to serve the Lord.

It is simply the fact that a husband who realizes his wife doesn't love him ... or a wife who realizes her husband doesn't love her ... is made more vulnerable to all kinds of temptations.

- a. A husband or wife who is unloved is tempted to "act out" in response, and the "acting out" will almost always involved sin.

Causing someone to sin is a very grievous wrong.

- a. **Matt 18:6-7 ~ "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it**

would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

- b. So Paul says: "... resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way" (Rom 14:13).

Conclusion.

Although C. S. Lewis wasn't married at the time he wrote *Mere Christianity*, he described marital love and marital oneness with amazing insight:

- a. *"What we call "being in love" is a glorious state, and in several ways, good for us. ... It is a noble feeling, but it is still a feeling. Now no feeling can be relied on to last in its full intensity, or even to last at all. Knowledge can last; principles can last; habits can last, but feelings come and go. And in fact, whatever people say, the state called "being in love" usually does not last. If the old fairy-tale ending 'They lived happily ever after' is taken to mean 'They felt for the next fifty years exactly as they felt the day before they were married,' then it says what probably never was nor ever could be true, and would be highly undesirable if it were. Who could bear to live in that excitement for even five years? What would become of your work, your appetite, your sleep, your friendships? But, of course, ceasing to be "in love" need not mean ceasing to love. Love in this second sense -- love as distinct from "being in love" is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit, reinforced by (in Christian marriages) the grace which both parties ask, and receive, from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other, as you love yourself even when you do not like yourself. They can retain this love even when each would easily, if they allowed themselves, be "in love" with someone else. "Being in love" first moved them to promise fidelity: this quieter love enables them to keep the promise. It is on this love that the engine of marriage is run: being in love was the explosion that started it."* C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), p83.

It is said of the godly wife of Proverbs, chapter 31, that **"the heart of her husband safely trusts her"** (v11) and **"she does him good and not evil all the days of her life"** v12).

- a. That is, she demonstrates her love for her husband all the days of her life.
 - ▶ That's the idea.

And the husband who "nourishes" and "cherishes" his wife as he does his own body (as Paul teaches in **(Eph 5:28,29)** will be demonstrating his love for his wife all the days of his life as well.