



THE SAMURAI HUSBAND

RESTORING THE **HONOR** OF A
CHRIST-CENTERED MARRIAGE

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***WHEN DEATH BECOMES HONORABLE,
TRANSFORMATION IS SOON TO FOLLOW.***

The Samurai Husband

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... -Ephesians 5:25, NIV

Picking out movies in my home is, well, interesting. I have learned that there are some movies I may really want to watch that are not even worth mentioning because I know before I can even finish the title the answer is already “no” because my wife is pretty anti-violence when it comes to movie selections. If there is even a hint of violence, there

is no real point in asking. I just know to save those movies for a guy's night or when I am home alone. I know some of you can feel me on this because there are some movies that you just don't watch with your wife. Most women are not into action-adventure or movies whose premise is based on fighting. There are definitely exceptions, but for the most part, the ladies are into chick flicks and romantic comedies.

One movie that I distinctly remember watching (without my wife mind you) which fell into this category was *The Last Samurai*, starring Tom Cruise. It is the story of an extremely gifted military man who turned into a remorseful alcoholic, haunted by past mistakes and massacres he was a part of during the Civil War. Tom Cruise's character is eventually offered a job making an unprecedented amount of money to go to Japan to train the Japanese army to crush a perceived Samurai warrior rebellion. He is shipped to Japan, begins training, and during the first military engagement with the Samurai, Cruise is taken captive. He is brought back to the Samurai village as a captive and over the next few months he comes to know and love the way of the Samurai culture while simultaneously overcoming his alcoholism and nightmares

of his traumatic past. When the time comes, Tom Cruise ends up casting his lot with the Samurais and fighting with them instead of against them, riding with the Samurai to engage the army he was paid to train.

The movie's final battle scene was comprised of 500 Samurai wielding swords, bows and arrows against a technologically advanced Japanese army well into the thousands. Even after creatively withstanding the first wave of the army's offensive attack and killing hundreds of Japanese soldiers, the remaining Samurai finally concede to the fact that defeat is inevitable against such a large, technologically advanced foe. They decide to make a final, fateful mounted assault directly into the heart of the remaining military stronghold knowing full well that no one will survive. Every last one of the Samurai warriors was mowed down by the superior firepower of the modernized Japanese army. The Samurai leader and hero, Katsumoto, mortally wounded by the gunfire, maintained his Samurai honor on the battlefield by committing seppuku, the Samurai ritual of maintaining one's honor through suicide, and therefore ending his own life to dramatically end the battle scene.

This movie piqued my interest in the Samurai lifestyle because of the way the Samurai were portrayed. While I obviously do not believe in the religious implications of the Samurai way of life and have no intention of killing myself in the name of honor, I still admire their discipline and commitment. Even the word Samurai means “to serve”. The Samurai adhered to Bushido, a unique Japanese code of conduct that literally means “the way of the warrior”. Bushido emphasized loyalty, honesty, obedience, and self-sacrifice among other virtuous qualities. These were a few of the tenets of Bushido that all Samurai abided by; they were kept with the utmost discipline. One such tenet was honor, a highly esteemed tenet of Bushido. Honor was so highly recognized that if a Samurai were to in some way lose his honor, the only way it could be regained was by committing *seppuku*, or the ritualized killing of oneself. For example, if a Samurai was faced with losing a battle, seppuku was the honorary custom to avoid falling into enemy hands and to avoid the shame of defeat. It was done by taking one’s tanto, or short sword, and stabbing oneself in the stomach and moving the blade left to right and letting death overcome you silently. To keep the pain from becoming too great, a fellow Samurai warrior would

eventually decapitate the disemboweled warrior. While this act may seem appalling to the Western way of thinking, seppuku was an honored tradition with the warrior class of the Samurai. This was one of the most respectful things a Samurai could do to maintain his honor.

Husbands, we have an even greater call and code than Bushido that we are called to follow. While the Bible never says to go kill yourself, the Bible does say to go kill yourself. Confused yet? Followers of Jesus don't literally plunge a blade into their stomach, but Paul calls us to be crucified with Christ so that we no longer live but Christ lives in us⁸. And Paul is merely echoing the call of Jesus to deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him daily,⁹ putting to death our selfish and worldly wants and desires and allowing Jesus to be our greatest desire. In the same way that the Samurai honor their way of life by committing seppuku, followers of Jesus honor and glorify Jesus when they lay down their lives for Him. All throughout the New Testament we see this call to lay down our life. All throughout the New Testament, we are called to die to ourselves, to give up our rights and control, and to consider

⁸ Galatians 2:20

⁹ Luke 9:23

others better than ourselves.¹⁰ It is not Bushido that Jesus' followers adhere to, but it's an even higher calling and one of the more important calls as a Christian; to give up control and relinquish one's life to Jesus.

This truth becomes very clear as Paul begins talking to husbands in Ephesians 5:25 and calls husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Now I hear a lot of people quote this verse, but most of the time it is a partial recitation. Most of the time you hear, "Husbands love your wife as Christ loved the church," and this is good, but it isn't Paul's complete thought. The critical six words in this sentence are "*and gave Himself up for her.*" The reason it gets left out a lot of times is because it's the part that doesn't allow for much wiggle room as a husband. The reason it is so important not to leave out, however, is because it doesn't allow a lot of wiggle room for a husband.

Ephesians 5:25 calls husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. As Christ GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR HER. Wow. Have you really ever thought of that? Have you allowed yourself to

¹⁰ Philippians 2:3-4

meditate on what it meant for Jesus to give Himself up for us? This is not an easy thing to set your mind on. Soldiers unmercifully beat Him and He took it. He was flogged with a whip made of nails, pieces of broken and serrated glass, and bone on its end so that it would literally tear the flesh off His back. He was then stripped down almost naked, surely after the blood had dried and adhered to His clothes, therefore reopening all of those terrible wounds. Soon after these wounds were reopened, the soldiers placed a massive piece of splintery wood on his bleeding back and shoulders and commanded Him to carry it to a hill called Golgotha, the place of the skull. Once He was painfully nailed to the cross and hoisted up, people came to see Him for the sole purpose of spitting in His face and unjustifiably mocking Him. Both Jews and Gentiles partook in the ridicule of the Messiah as He was being crucified for their sake.

Now would be a good time to put this book down, go rent *The Passion of the Christ* and watch that movie. It is the best visual aid that I know of to let you viscerally experience what Jesus went through on the cross. It was vicious. It was unjustified. It was horrible. Justice seemed nowhere to be found. The Innocent was being brutally murdered by the guilty. He was blameless and perfect in

all aspects of the word but He was being assaulted as if He were the worst criminal in the land. The bottom line: Jesus did not deserve any of that. In fact, it was just the opposite. The people who deserved that horrific death were the same ones that were administering it to Him!

But Jesus not only endured it. He willfully, dare I say even joyfully¹¹, allowed Himself to be put in that situation. Even though He had all authority to do otherwise, to strike down the soldiers who were killing Him, to call down fire from heaven on those who mocked Him on the cross, to tell the earth to open up its mouth and swallow those who spit on Him in disbelief, He instead chose to look at them with compassion and say, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”¹²

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

What a high call to be a husband. As He gladly gave Himself up for the church, so you are called to gladly give yourself up for your wife. This is our act of worship and

¹¹ Hebrews 12:2

¹² Luke 23:34

obedience as husbands. This is our daily seppuku, the act of dying to yourself for the sake of Jesus and to love your wife with the love that He has for her.

The thing about Ephesians 5:25 is that it doesn't give us husbands an escape clause. If you're dead, you're dead. Jesus didn't partially die on the cross. He was completely *dead*. No pulse. No breathing. Nothing. Only after Christ totally gave Himself up in complete and utter submission to His Father did God breathe the resurrection life into His body. That is our example: to love your wife as Christ has loved the church and gave Himself up for her. So let me ask you a few pointed questions: "Have you truly died to yourself and your desires¹³ when it comes to your marriage? When it comes to loving and serving your wife? What are you still trying to hold on to? Why?" (These are good questions that any good husband should ask himself.)

Back in Jesus' day when horses were used in battle, there was only one specific type of horse that was used. The type of horse has nothing to do with the breed or the skill of the horse. In fact, the horses chosen weren't always the best breed. The horses weren't always the fastest, the

13 Galatians 5:24

prettiest, or the strongest. Only one thing mattered when it came to a war-ready horse: the only thing that mattered was if the horse was broken. A horse had to be broken of its own will and own ways or else it was rendered useless in battle. When you are part of the cavalry's first offensive charge that is closing in on the enemy's front line of defense, their spears raised and pointed directly at you, you can't have a horse that is going to stop short or have any concern for its own well being. Have you ever seen any horses in *Braveheart*, *Gladiator*, or *Lord of the Rings* turn and run the other way? No way, because a horse like that would never be chosen to be ridden into battle. You need that horse to be fully submitted to its master and willing to do and go wherever he commands. I would rather take the mutt of the horse litter that is broken than some fast, strong, fancy horse that is going to turn the other way and get me stabbed in the back by my enemy!

Ephesians 5 is very clear what the Lord wants in a husband. A man that is broken. A man that is submitted. A man that is willing to give up everything for his master and his God. A man who is going to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. This is the kind of man God is looking for to lead his wife and family well.

No other type of man will do.

Expiation

Now I want to be very clear: brokenness does NOT equal weakness. That couldn't be farther from the truth. Jesus was physically abused and killed in one of the most wretched ways possible. His body was broken in the worst way possible... but that did not make Him weak. Jesus was not a pushover. He did not get crucified because He was too much of a weakling to speak up or stand up for Himself. On the contrary, there was purpose and cause for Him to receive what He endured. He was intentionally broken so that He, God Himself, could reconcile the ones He loved.¹⁴ Because of His brokenness, we were given the opportunity to restore our relationship with God. God made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us so that in Him, we might become the righteousness of God!¹⁵ Jesus lived the perfect life we should have lived and then took our place and died the death we should have died. He became the proverbial whipping boy and was punished in our place *for the sins we committed!* That type of willful sacrifice and absorption of

¹⁴ 2nd Corinthians 5:18

¹⁵ 2nd Corinthians 5:21

sin takes insane resolve and strength and is far from any type of weakness.

This act that Jesus performed on the cross is actually called expiation. It's a theological term most of us haven't thought twice about before, but it is one of the wonders of the cross. This one word represents an important part of the power and beauty of what happened on the cross and why that was an eternally altering event in history. It is something that every husband should know inside out if he wants to actually love his wife as Christ loved the church. So, what is expiation and why does it matter to you as a husband? Well, keep reading...

Expiation is a huge part of what happen on the cross. Jesus took away our sin by taking it on Himself. The prefix *ex* means "out of" or "from," so expiation has to do with removing something or taking something away. In Biblical terms, it has to do with taking away guilt through the payment of a penalty or the offering of atonement. Jesus absorbed our sin and took it away so that we could be free from its penalty and effects. He didn't have to. He wasn't forced to. But He did, and therefore covered us because of His deep love for us. Because of this righteous act, we have the blemish and stain of sin removed!

Husbands, if we are to love our wives as Christ loved the church, then we need to regularly live out the act of expiation. What does that mean in the context of a marriage? It means that if your wife sins against you, yells in your face, doesn't do what she says she is going to, lets you down sexually, disagrees with you, or is being selfish, you take it like a man.

Take it like Jesus. Expiate the transgression.

Absorb it and don't fight back by pointing out her inconsistencies or by getting dragged into the fight. Simply diffuse the situation by absorbing the (fill in the blank): the rude comment, undone chore, cold shoulder, etc. Jesus covered us in our sin when we were proverbially spitting in His face, and we are called to do the same. He didn't call out all our shortcomings or fight back about why He was right and why we were wrong (even though that was and is always the case with Jesus). One way to flex your spiritual muscle as the head of the household is to follow His example; don't fight back and exert your dominance over your wife like the world tells you, but cover your wife in the same way Jesus covered you.

We need to redefine what it means to be a man, because this machismo garbage of the world doesn't hold

a candle to Jesus. So take it like a real man; get used to practicing the art of expiation.

We look to Jesus as our example. As Jesus gave Himself on the cross, He never retaliated. He never justified His actions. He never called the people out on their sin. It wasn't because He was a coward. It wasn't because He was weak. He did the hardest thing possible to do when you know you are right and the other person is wrong... instead of proclaiming His rightness and proclaiming His victory, He loved them. He wasn't concerned about who was right or wrong, He was concerned about maintaining relationship with them. He was concerned about loving them. If there was ever a moment in all of history that someone could have been justified in defending himself, this was it!! The men who were spitting in Jesus' face and mocking Him while He was on the cross were the same men that Jesus was literally dying for. Jesus could have easily, and very justifiably, called down fire from heaven and licked those clowns up in righteous anger. But He didn't. Instead, He chose the high ground of expiation. He just took it in one of the greatest acts of love and strength this world has ever seen.

The ultimate act of seppuku.¹⁶

So I want you to ask yourself: Am I a Samurai Husband? When is the last time you, being rooted in love, just took it for the sake of your marriage? When is the last time you expiated a situation even though you knew your wife was wrong? If you never have, are you at least willing to try?

Gents, these are important questions! I cannot reiterate this enough: expiation is one of the most effective tools you have in your arsenal as a husband. It is like the bomb squad of your marriage that can effectively disarm massive blow-ups from occurring because the wires of the ticking time bomb of an argument are cut when you expiate a harsh word, a bad situation, or an emotional moment. Don't wait for the bomb to go off and simply resign yourself to be the janitor who has to clean up the mess after the explosion. Stop it from ever going off. Follow in the way of your Master.

¹⁶ Only it wasn't to preserve His honor; it was to guarantee ours!

The Struggle Is Real

When you utilize the art of spiritual seppuku and expiation, you are taking a very real stand against a very real enemy. And no, the enemy is not your wife. The Bible is very clear about two things: the first is that your marriage is one of the most important witnesses to God's grace, love, and glory that you will ever have the honor of being a part of.¹⁷ The second is that our struggle is not really against flesh and blood¹⁸; we have a real enemy who is roaming around like a roaring lion looking for people to devour.¹⁹ Every time you allow yourself to be overtaken by anger, every time you lash out in frustration, every time you have the opportunity to expiate but do not, you allow the enemy a foothold in your marriage. You allow the devil to take a small amount of ground in this ongoing battle for your marriage.

But remember this: every chance you have to love, to reconcile, to fight for your wife (even when it feels like she is the enemy!) is a chance to proclaim Christ's victory in you, your marriage, and makes you a participant in

¹⁷ Ephesians 5:25, 32

¹⁸ Ephesians 6:11

¹⁹ 1st Peter 5:8

the grand scheme of God's promise that heaven is indeed invading earth.²⁰ What a cool thought: every time you love your wife well there is a shift in the spiritual realm where the armies of heaven are taking another step towards the utter domination of the enemy's camp. Every time you expiate a situation, forgive a harsh word, show love instead of reciprocating anger, you cry out with your actions that God is in control and this reality and truth ripple through your wife, children, your friends, and even your enemies in the spiritual realm. It may seem like a small thing in the moment, but over time, that one act of forgiveness turns into dozens of avoided arguments, which turns into hundreds of diffused attempts of the enemy's tactics, which turns into thousands of Kingdom victories, and your marriage is built up instead of broken down.

Jesus, let your Kingdom come!!

Turn to Appendix A for some questions to help you dig deeper into the content of this chapter



²⁰ Matthew 6:10

