

The Role of the Husband in the Marriage

Every marriage is going to experience some serious challenges and difficulty. What you must do to make sure that you are "doing your part" in the marriage. One of the primary reasons for the break-up of so many marriages today is the failure of men and women to understand and apply the specific roles and responsibilities God has given to the husband and the wife. And the bulk of that responsibility rests squarely on the shoulders of the man!

When a man is out of the will of God, he is a menace to himself and everyone else. Jonah, the Old Testament prophet, just about brought a whole ship down because of his disobedience. Many husbands do the same to their marriages. Their marriages are in trouble because they are unwilling to obey God's commandments to them. Let's look at some of those specific commands to a husband....

Read Ephesians 5:22-33

1. The Husband Must Love His Wife

Verses 25 sums up the main responsibility of the man in three words: "Husbands love your wives...." Husbands hold the key to a flourishing marriage. Men are to be initiators. The wife comes into full fruition and submission in response to the husband loving her as he should.

A. Love as Jesus Loves.

How are we to love our wives? The passage says, "just as Christ... loved the church and gave himself for her" (v25).

How did Christ demonstrate his love? Primarily by example and death: " But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8/see also John 15:13).

As a result of Jesus' selfless love, the church loves Jesus and submits to Him: "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). In the same way, when the wife sees the love of her husband, she will love him and submit to him.

But this cannot be our goal! Our goal as husbands must be to fulfill God's command to us and leave our wife's reaction up to Him.

B. Be Willing to "Lay Down Your Life." Read Philippians 2:3-9

To "love as Christ loved" and "lay down" your life means that you must focus on your partner's needs and not your own. Verse three tells us to do nothing through "selfish ambition." Remember, Jesus said, " The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20: 28).

" He made Himself of no reputation." [v.7]

The literal translation of this verse is " He emptied Himself." Jesus had a complete attitude of unselfishness.

"He humbled Himself." [v.8]

True authority comes from humility. Authority does not mean to manipulate and lord over (that is insecurity). A man who is constantly lecturing his wife on his authority probably has very little. A husband must be firm and decisive, but also humble and unselfish.

Moses, one of the greatest leaders of all time, was called " the meekest man on the face of the earth." Meekness is not weakness; it is power under constraint. True authority is given by God: " The head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Spiritual authority is rooted in a paradox: "if anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" Mark 9:35). Jesus demonstrated this principle when He washed His disciples feet: " Jesus, knowing that the father had given all things into His hand ... rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself ... and began to wash the disciples feet ..." (John 13:3-5).

C. Love Unconditionally.

Do you love your wife? The fact of the matter is that many wives are not sure if their husbands love them. There are three different words in the original Greek language for love.

Each one of these "loves" has an important part to play in the marriage, but one of them should always prevail.

1) Eros (love on the physical plain)

Eros is initial love that attracts a man and woman together. This sexual love plays an important role in marriage, building intimacy and closeness. It is a way of expressing your "oneness" as a couple. It is part of "being fruitful and multiplying." And it is a source of sexual fulfillment-- a God given desire to be fulfilled only in marriage. Scripture says, "drink water from your own cistern and running water from your own well. Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth" (Proverbs 5:15, 17-18).

Paul speaks of the importance of this love in marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5: "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by natural consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self--control."

The problem with eros is that it is essentially selfish. It takes, wanting to give nothing in return.

2) Philio (love on an emotional plain)

In contrast to eros, philio, takes, but it also desires to give. It is a "friendship" type of love. It has been defined as " a love that comes as a result of a pleasure or delight one draws from the object loved."

3) Agape (love on a spiritual plain)

In contrast to philio, agape springs from a sense of the preciousness of the object. Agape is primarily determined by the character of the one who loves--not necessarily the "lovableness" of the object. It is not feeling emotion. It is unconditional. And this is the kind of love God commands us as husbands to love our wives with.

The world's is always object-oriented. A person is loved because of physical attractiveness, personality, wit, prestige, or some feature or trait that we find appealing. This type of love is fickle however. For once that trait found "lovable" is diminished by age, or someone more talented or gifted comes along, this fickle love ceases.

A Sacrificial Love

Our love for our mate in to be an "agape" form of love, since that is the kind of love Christ display toward the church. Pastor John MacArthur says, "loving as Christ loves does not depend in the least in what others are in themselves, but entirely on what we are in Christ ."

The husband who loves his wife for what she can give him loves as the world loves, not as Christ loves. The husband that loves his wife as Christ loves His church gives everything he has for his wife, including his life, if necessary.

If a loving husband is willing to sacrifice his life for his wife, he is certainly willing to make lesser sacrifices for her. He puts his own likes, desires, opinions, preferences and welfare aside if that is required to please her and meet her needs. He dies to self in order to live for his wife, because that is what Christ's kind of love demands.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

A Patient love

This passage in 1 Corinthians gives the definitive illustration of agape love. Verse four says that "love suffers long." In other words, this type of love allows your spouse to change in God's timing.

A Kind Love

Verse four also states that "love is kind ." You display this type of love to your wife through such things as tenderness, gifts, and telling her that you love her (see Proverbs 31:28; Colossians 3:19).

II. The Husband Must Spiritually Lead

Returning to Ephesians 5, notice what Paul writes after likening the love Christ has for the church to the love the husband should have for his wife: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her ..." (vv.25-26).

Too many men in Christian marriages are not the spiritual leaders they should be. At best, many are passive. At worst, they are actually hindering the spiritual growth of the family. Yet, no one can be a greater hindrance to the wife's spiritual growth than the husband. On the other hand, no one can be a greatest encouragement.

Looking after your wife's spiritual well-being

The husband's first priority must be to make sure that his wife is properly aligned with God! He should recognize that her personal happiness as a woman, wife and mother all hinge upon her relationship with the Lord.

You can't say, "that's her problem!" Remember , you are now one.. And the husband needs to be the spiritual leader in the home. Peter writes, "Husbands, likewise dwell with them with understanding, give honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:17).

The phrase "dwell with" literally means "to dwell down with; to be aligned to." In other words, you are allowing God to work in your lives. You are "settling down," and not looking for any excuse to "get out of the house." it comes as no surprise that one of the major causes of unfaithfulness on the part of the wife is the continued absence of the husband.

A failure to lead will spiritually hinder you.

Husbands, notice that a failure to "dwell" with your wife will result in your prayers being hindered. This happiness because "your is out of order." Jesus speaks of this same principal in Matthew 5:23, where He says that if a person brings a gift to the altar and remembers that someone holds something against him , he must "leave his gift at the altar" and seek reconciliation with the individual he has offended (Matthew 5:23).

One of the key ways we can do this in our marriage is through communication. We Must not let anything or anyone close this life line off.

Interestingly, Paul refers back to Genesis in his description of the role of husbands in Ephesians chapter five: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife ..." (v31). The key to a healthy marriage--and open communication--goes back to the principal of "leaving and cleaving." You must cherish and honor that oneness, that friendship.

An Encouraging Thought...

Husbands, you may feel like loving your wife "as Christ loved the church" is an impossible task. Remember, the "love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the holy spirit who was given to us Romans (5:5).

God has given you the ability to do this through the power of His Holy Spirit. So make sure you follow Paul's admonition just a few verses prior to this description of the husband's role to "be filled with the spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).