

The Role of the Wife in the Marriage

The biblical definition of the roles of husband and wife has been rejected as outdated and archaic in today's "liberated" and "enlightened" society.

In the name of equality, we have blurred the lines and removed the wonderful distinction between man and woman. We have offered substitutes for the family, from couples living together to homosexuals trying to adopt children. We have "dissolved" our marriages and broken apart our families at a record rate, reassuring ourselves with how "resilient" our children are, and how they will "bounce back." After all, our society tells us, all that matters is your personal happiness and fulfillment. It does not matter how your actions affect others--as long as you are "true to yourself."

But we haven't found that elusive happiness we have been seeking outside of God's order. This new view of marriage has not been successful. Our children have not "bounced back" as we hoped.

The question we must answer is this: Are we going to let secular culture dictate how we view marriage- or will we follow God's design?

Far too many-even in the church "bought into" today's selfish, narcissistic mind set. Such thinking will only bring personal and marital misery. We need to return God's blueprint for the family. It is time that we start thinking and acting biblically, even if it means "going against the grain" of much of today's popular thinking. In understanding God's design for the wife in the Christian marriage, it is important that we understand the internal struggle that makes following God's principals so difficult -a struggle that dates back to the Garden of Eve.

The Source of Struggle: A Woman's Desire for Headship

After the fall of Adam of Eve, God told Eve, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16b). In essence, God was saying, Things will be different now, Eve. You are going to have a bend in your nature, as will Adam, that is a direct result of the curse of sin. That bend in a word is selfishness.

As mentioned in previous message, the word for "desire" in this verse means "to compel, impel, urge, or seek control over," God was telling Eve she would have a sinful and selfish desire to seek control over Adam, to usurp the place of man's headship. When God told Eve that Adam would "rule over" her, He meant that man would seek to dominate and control the woman.

With the fall and it's curse came the distortion of woman's proper submissiveness and man's proper authority. As a result, women have a sinful inclination to usurp man's authority, and men have a sinful inclination put women under his feet. This was not part of God's original design for man and woman.

The Secret to Success: God's Blueprint for a Successful Marriage

Read Ephesians 5:18-33

1. Be Filled with God's Spirit As mentioned before, the first step in following God's design for married couples is to "be filled", or contorted by, the Spirit. To attempt to do what God tell you to do with out the Holy Spirit's help is impossible. The calling of God is the enabling of God.

2. Before a word is said about wives submitting to their husbands, both spouses are commanded to "submit to one another in the fear of God" (v.21). The word used for "submit" means "to get in order under something." In a military sense, it means "to rank beneath, to rank under."

3. Wives Must Submit to Husband's Loving Leadership Though Paul starts out with "ladies first" in the roles and responsibilities of the marriage partners, it is clear that the wife's submissiveness can and will de a response to the husband's godly and loving leadership

A husband is not to treat his wife as a servant or a child, but as an equal for whom God has given him the responsibility to care and provide for, to love and to protect.

We are all submitting at some point. Wives are called to submit to the loving leadership for their husbands, and husbands are to bow to the needs of their wives. The issue us not superiority or inferiority. It is about sacrifice. It is about your mate. Most importantly, it is about obedience to God!

The Principal of Authority in Marriage

When God calls a woman to submit to the leadership of the man, this is not saying the woman is any less than the man, because she is not. Galations 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ."

Although there is no difference between man and woman in the nature of their salvation of standing with God, there is a principal of authority in the family. Those who struggle with this concept will be helped by considering

Paul's words: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3)

What does this verse mean when it says that the "the head of Christ is God"? As we studied earlier in this series, the bible speaks of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are co-equal and co-eternal. This verse is saying that God the Father is the head of Christ-not in essence or nature, but in function. Jesus was in His very nature God, but He "laid aside" His rights and privileges and humbled Himself as a servant.

The relationship structure of Jesus Christ to God the Father is the same one presented to us in marriage. Though the husband and wife are equal in their standing before God, in order for the family to function in harmony, the woman, with no loss of dignity-takes the place of submission to the headship of her husband.

God's divine design intends that the wife's respect, help and obedience would be matched by her husband's servant leadership as they submit together to the lordship of Jesus Christ and to each other.

I seek my wife's input and wisdom before making most of my decisions. In describing the "woman of virtue" in Proverbs 31, the following is said: "Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness." (vv.11-12;25-27 / NIV)

There will be times where, in the interest of the family, a husband must make certain decisions that may not be popular. At those times, the wife needs to accept that God, having put her husband in that position of authority, will speak to his heart.

The Motive and Model of Submission

1. The Motive of Submission Wives are told to submit to their husbands "as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22) Wives need to submit to their husbands as an act of submission to the Lord. Scripture reminds us, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for man" (Colossians 3:23)

That very attitude can change the way you do everything. Ruth Graham has a sign over her sink that reads, "Divine service done here daily."

In other words, make that meal, change the diaper, sing that song, perform those household chores as if you were doing that job "unto the Lord." and submit to your husband in the same way.

Those who are in authority over us do not always command our respect. They may not inspire us as we would like them to. We might even disagree with them at times. But we recognize that their authority comes from God. So we do those things "for them" as much as we do it "for the Lord."