

SESSION 3

The Fundamental Role of the Wife

Differentiated roles were corrupted, not created, by the fall. They are a reflection of God's best, not a response to our worst. The ordering of the marriage relationship was ordained by God at creation for His own glory and for the good of both men and women.

Even though men and women are positionally and personally equal, they are not equal in function and authority. Functional distinction does not require inequality, as demonstrated by Jesus Christ. Jesus is the essence of submission.

Genesis 1:27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them

Galatians 3:27-28 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus

Real oneness cannot be experienced unless the husband and wife know, accept, and fulfill their varying but complementary responsibilities.¹ Obedience to God's commands for the husbands and wives is founded on Spirit filled submission to Christ.

Ephesians 5:21 Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ"

1 Peter 5:5 ...all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Being Spirit filled = being controlled by the Holy Spirit

Being controlled by the Holy Spirit = submitting your thoughts, words, ways, and will to God's revealed word

Being submissive to God at all times, in all relationships, in all thoughts, words, and actions

1 Corinthians 10:31 *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*

Galatians 3:17 *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*

To humbly place oneself under the authority of another, putting their interests before your own, putting yourself in subjection for their good and His glory, is the essence of humility and selfless love.

Jesus Christ is the perfect example – subjecting Himself to His Father in perfect obedience, and subjecting Himself to mankind in loving self-sacrifice for our own good and salvation.

The church is called to imitate Christ by willingly placing ourselves in subjection to His will, His ways, His Word, in a desire to love and please Him by being obedient to our Lord

Wives have been grace-granted a role and responsibility that both reflects the love and submission of the church to Christ, and exemplifies the humility, submission, and love of Jesus Christ Himself.

¹ Wayne Mack, Strengthening Your Marriage, p.16.

I. THE WIFE IS TO LOVE HER HUSBAND BY BEING SUBMISSIVE

A. The submission of the wife should reflect the submission of the CHURCH

Our obedience to Christ is the model for wives. The way that we submit to Christ in the church should be a demonstration of how the wife is to submit to her husband in all things. And visa versa. When a wife is humbly submitting to her husband, she becomes an example and a testimony to the church of how we should be obeying Christ.

Ephesians 5:21-24 *...being subject to one another in the fear of Christ. **Wives, be subject to your own husbands**, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the **wives ought to be to their husbands in everything**.*

Be Subject – Borrowing the verb from 5:21– Present Middle Participle – obey, submit to; be under the control of; humble oneself to serve the interest of others (middle shows - active, willing submission) – putting yourself in subjection

Your own husband – particular husband, belonging only to you

Marriage is particular – purposeful (more later)

God has ordained a specific husband for you

Your husband is to image and imitate Christ (love, sanctify, and perfect you, so that he may present you back to your Father (his God) holy, blameless, without any spot, wrinkle, or blemish))

Marriage should be a tangible expression of the love of the church towards Christ, Christ towards His bride

Marriage is an expression of the love of God (both in submission and authority)

As to the Lord – complete submissiveness in everything (reflecting our relationship to Christ)

Marriage reflects our union and relationship to Christ

Wife is to husband as church is to Christ

This is for her sanctification, maturity, to be complete

Colossians 3:18 Wives, **be subject to your husbands**, as is fitting in the Lord

Colossians 3:18 - 2nd plural, present middle imperative – active, willing, commanded

Titus 2:3-5 *Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may instruct the young women in sensibility: to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, **being subject to their own husbands**, so that the word of God will not be slandered.*

1 Peter 3:1-6 ***In the same way**, you wives, **be subject to your own husbands** so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, **they may be won without a word** by the conduct of their wives, as they observe your pure conduct with fear. Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on garments; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible quality of a lowly and quiet spirit, which is precious in*

*the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, **being subject to their own husbands**, just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children if you do good, not fearing any intimidation*

Submission is courageous, fearless, and relentless. A submissive person is someone who believes God, trusts His love, His word, His power, His promises enough not to fight back or defend themselves. They entrust themselves to their faithful Creator in doing what is right. This isn't apathy. This isn't "let go, let God." This is deep faith, profound trust, that is displayed in submission and obedience to God. And our Father tells us that the most precious, valuable, beautiful, lovely attribute in His children is a humble, contrite, gentle, meek, quiet, patient, joyful, submissive heart.

Isaiah 66:2 "But **to this one I will look**, To **him who is humble and contrite** of spirit, and who **trembles at My word**.

2 Chronicles 16:9 The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may **strongly support those whose heart is completely His**.

There may be no better demonstration of the loving, compassionate, submissive, sacrificial suffering of Christ than a submissive, humble, patient, gentle, quiet, respectful wife who is married to a rebellious, disobedient, or unbelieving husband.

Submission in Suffering:

Our Submission in Suffering Proves the Gospel (1-2)

In the same way – Likewise (immediate context = like Christ)

- Be Submissive - ὑποτάσσω – present, passive, participle – implied imperative (it is a command)
 - o Put underneath, placed under someone/something; assigned underneath; arranged underneath; obedient; subordinate
 - o Willingly lay aside yourself, in honor and love for someone else
- Disobedience - Some are disobedient to the word of God – ἀπειθέω – PAI – ongoing refusal to believe, to obey, to comply, insubordinate. Willful disbelief and disobedience.

Why submission?

- ἵνα – Purpose clause –
 - o Κερδαίνω – to gain, to win – Future - They will/shall/might be won!!!
- People (family members) are watching - ἐπιπτεῖω – watch, look, observe with the eyes
 - o Respectful – φόβος – reverence, fear, honor
 - o Chaste - Pure - ἀγνός – holy, undefiled, innocent, free from sin
- Our submissive behavior proves the Gospel we claim to believe – we prove our faith in God, we prove our trust of Him, we prove our belief in what He says.
 - o A lack of submission proves that you do not trust God (take things into your own hands); impatience, anxiousness, rudeness, defense, anger – these are signs of distrust and unbelief.
 - o Submission, humility, purity, honor, respect, patience, meekness, kindness, demonstrate our belief and prove the validity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Our Submission in Suffering Pleases Our Father (3-4)

Being submissive shows reverence, worship, trust, and love for our Father God

- Submission is an inherent attribute of a child of God who desires to please their Father
- Internal vs. external adornment
 - o Adornment – order – κόσμος – order, decorate, beautify, arrange things that they are attractive, beautiful, presentable, appealing
 - o Must Be Internal – devote yourself to making your character beautiful; personality to be pleasing; your disposition attractive; spiritual virtue & integrity
 - o Even if they don't believe, they see the integrity, character, upright life, Christ-like love and self-sacrifice – they respect that
 - This character has imperishable quality - ἀφθαρτος – incorruptible – this is heavenly quality; this is holiness; this is Christ-like
 - So What does imperishable character look like?
 - Gentle - πραῦς – humble, meek, patience and self-controlled
 - Quiet - ἡσυχίος – restful, calm, peaceful, silent –
 - o The nature of Christ
 - o The nature of someone who trusts their Father - Humility, gentleness, meekness, peace, silence, submission

Do you want to know what is most beautiful, most treasured, most precious, most valuable, most loved by your Father – silent, humble, meek, submissive obedience because you trust Him and you love Him.

“How a believer lives in that most intimate relationship helps make the grace of Christ believable.” – John MacArthur

B. The submission of the wife should reflect the submission of CHRIST

1 Peter 2:21-25 **For to this you have been called,** since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps,** who did no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; who being reviled, was not reviling in return; while suffering, He was uttering no threats, but **kept entrusting Himself to Him** who judges righteously. Who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that having died to sin, we might live to righteousness; by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Philippians 2:5-8 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied Himself,** taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,** even death on a cross.

1 Corinthians 15:27-28 For **He has put all things in subjection under His feet.** But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then **the Son Himself also will be subjected** to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Humble Subjection to God's Will Produces Christ-likeness

Submission produces sanctification

Submission produces maturity

Submission produces Christ-like character

"A wife's submission is not an optional feature of Christian marriage, it is mandated by the Bible... Wives cannot live in submission to the Lord if they are not living in biblical submission to their husbands... God will not command you to do something bad for you; you can trust him even if you can't always trust your husband. Submission is often difficult, but it will never be harmful to your soul." – Paul Shirley p.11-18

What submission is NOT...

- Putting the husband in the place of Christ
- Merely a concept for women
- Becoming a slave of the husband
- Giving up independent thought and becoming intellectually stagnant
- Keeping her opinions and thoughts to herself
- Following her husband into sin
- Giving up all efforts to influence the husband
- Doing nothing to protect herself from an unreasonable husband
- Based on the husband's superiority or worthiness

What submission IS...

- An attitude & actions (gladness & delight)
- A willing choice (not a feeling; husband does not force)
- A spiritual matter (“*as unto the Lord*” – Need Holy Spirit)
- Comprehensive & continuous (not pick and choose)
- A way to express dedication and devotion to her husband
- A protection for the wife (true freedom is not getting out from under authority)
- The best way to influence the husband
- Sometimes unfair (a wife must trust God – 1 Peter 2:19-23)
- God’s way of maintaining order in the home

II. THE WIFE IS TO LOVE HER HUSBAND BY BEING HELPFUL

“God made the woman to be man's helper. Without the woman, man, even in his perfect condition, was incomplete... God created the woman to correspond to man... the wife was made to fulfill the needs, the lacks, the inadequacies of her husband. She was made to be her husband's unique helper.”²

Genesis 2:18 *“Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”*

Proverbs 14:1 *“The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish tears it down with her own hands.”*

Proverbs 12:4 *“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames him is like rotteness in his bones.”*

Titus 2:3-5 *...instruct the young women in sensibility: to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home...*

οἰκουργός – working at home. οἶκος – house, home family. ἔργον – work, duty, deed.

“This is the primary sphere of ministry and influence for a wife and mom; her primary duties revolve around managing and maintaining a spiritually ordered home life.” – Paul Shirley

“Experienced wives and mothers will find their greatest avenue of ministry in teaching younger wives what they need to know to be effective wives, mothers, and homemakers...A married woman’s first duty is to her own family, in her own household. Managing her own home should be her primary employment, her first task, her most important job, and her true career.” - John MacArthur p. 42-43

1 Timothy 2:9-12 *Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, with modesty and self-restraint, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly clothing, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women professing godliness. A woman must learn in quietness, in all submission. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first formed, and then Eve. And it*

² Wayne Mack, Strengthening Your Marriage, p. 21-22.

was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into trespass. But she will be saved through the bearing of children, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with self-restraint.

“It should be understood that for every wife the first duty is the making and keeping of her own home. Her first and best work should be done there, and until it is well done she has no right to go outside to take up other duties. She is to be a “worker at home.” She must look upon her home as the one spot on earth for which she alone is responsible, and which she must cultivate well for God if she never does anything outside...Let it be remembered that Christ's work in the home is the first that He gives to every wife, and that no amount of consecrated activities in other spheres will atone, in this world or in the next, for neglect or failure there.”³

Devoted: Great Men and Their Godly Moms

- John Newton, Hudson Taylor, J. Gresham Machen, Christopher Yuan, William Borden, Charles Hodge, John Piper, Charles Spurgeon, Augustine, D.L. Moody, Timothy
- Mothers sacrificing, praying, pouring into their sons – Humility; Submission; Influence

How can a wife be helpful to her husband?⁴

(Implications/Application mainly from Prov. 31:10-31; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

- By making the home a safe place (encouragement, comfort, understanding, refuge)
- By being trustworthy and dependable
- By maintaining a good attitude
- By influencing him to make godly decisions (like Esther, not Jezebel)
- By discussing things lovingly, openly, and honestly
- By being satisfied with her position, her possessions, and her tasks
- By showing an interest in his problems and concerns
- By demonstrating physical affection to him
- By enjoying shared activities with him
- By being an industrious, frugal, diligent, and creative member of the team
- By keeping herself beautiful, especially in the inner person
- By maintaining a healthy spiritual life
- By building loyalty to him in the children
- By showing confidence in his decisions
- By not doing something that would be detrimental or harmful to him
- By pointing out his “blind spots” and assisting him in his struggle with sin

III. THE WIFE IS TO LOVE HER HUSBAND BY BEING RESPECTFUL

Ephesians 5:33

...the wife must see to it that she **respects her husband**

1 Peter 3:5-6

For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being subject to their own husbands, just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, **calling him lord**. You have become her children if you do good, not fearing any intimidation.

A loving wife would refer to her husband as “my dear” not “my project.”

³ J.R. Miller, Home-Making, p. 67-68.

⁴ Wayne Mack, Strengthening Your Marriage, p. 22-23.

- Praise
- Encouragement
- More commendation than criticism
- More aware of his effort than his failures
- More admiration than aggravation

The excellent wife is rare – like a valuable pearl
 Trustworthy; Industrious; resourceful; hard working
 Sacrifices; not lazy; diligent; disciplined
 Frugal; good at business; strong; enterprising; generous; confident; anchored at home
 Wise; kind; brings a good reputation to her husband

The Excellent Wife (Proverbs 31:10-31)

An excellent wife, who can find?
 For her worth is far above pearls.
 The heart of her husband trusts in her,
 And he will have no lack of gain.
 She deals bountifully with him for good and not evil
 All the days of her life.
 She searches for wool and flax
 And works with her hands in delight.
 She is like merchant ships;
 She brings her food from afar.
 And she rises while it is still night,
 And gives food to her household
 And a portion to her young women.
 She makes plans for a field and buys it;
 From the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
 She girds herself with strength
 And makes her arms strong.
 She senses that her gain is good;
 Her lamp does not go out at night.
 She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
 And her hands hold fast the spindle.
 She extends her hand to the poor,
 And she stretches out her hands to the needy.
 She is not afraid of the snow for her household,
 For all her household are clothed with scarlet.
 She makes coverings for herself;
 Her clothing is fine linen and purple.
 Her husband is known in the gates,

When he sits with the elders of the land.
She makes linen garments and sells them,
And gives belts to the tradesmen.
Strength and majesty are her clothing,
And she smiles at the future.
She opens her mouth in wisdom,
And the instruction of lovingkindness is on her tongue.
She watches over the ways of her household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness.
Her children rise up and bless her;
As for her husband, he also praises her, saying:
“Many daughters have done excellently,
But you have gone above them all.”
Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,
But **a woman who fears Yahweh**, she shall be praised.
Give to her from the fruit of her hands,
And let her works praise her in the gates.

Homework

“THE CHRISTIAN HOME” READING:

Read the Chapter 2 “Submissive Wives” (13 pages)

Go over Chapter 2 discussion questions with your spouse.

1. **PRAYER:** Pray for your spouse every day this week
2. **THE WORD:** Memorize Ephesians 5:21-24
3. **THE DATE:** Go on a date with your spouse this week
 - a. Discuss God’s Fundamental Roles for Wives (Submission, Help, Reverence)
 - b. Reflect on ways you have failed to weave together into “one flesh” in total intimacy and total unity
 - i. What parts of your relationship need weaving back together?
 - ii. What are you not sharing with one another, that needs to be shared in order to have complete unity, transparency, honesty in your relationship?

- iii. Do you have oneness with your bodies, possessions, insights, problems, aspirations, successes, sufferings, abilities, etc?
 - c. Write down 3 ways you will commit to weave together in deeper unity moving forward
 - d. Tell each other at least five things you love and appreciate about them
- 4. **THE EXTRA CREDIT:** Listen to “God’s Pattern for Wives” by John MacArthur
 - a. **SERMON** –
 - b. <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1944/gods-pattern-for-wives-part-1>
 - c. <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1945/gods-pattern-for-wives-part-2>