

Roles in Marriage

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READ - Colossians 3:17-21; Ephesians 5:21-33

TEXT - *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Colossians 3:17, KJV)*

Introduction

In these lessons I would like to spend some time looking at what the Bible teaches about the home. Specifically, I want to focus on the role each of us plays in our homes.

Now you can go to any bookstore in America today and find entire sections devoted to this subject. The problem is, very few of those books will agree with the Bible's viewpoint. The world takes a very different view of the roles of men and women. You will have to decide whether you want to pattern your life after the Bible, or after the world.

ILLUS - Beth and I have a plaque hanging in our home which has *Joshua 24:15 - As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*. Throughout this series of lessons, I'll be reminding you to consider that verse, and applying it to your home. Pattern your life and your home after the Word of God, and you will NEVER regret it. Pattern it after the world, and you very well may regret it sometime down the road.

ILLUS - The captain of the ship looked into the dark night and saw faint lights in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman to send a message "Alter your course 10 degrees south." Promptly a return message was received: "Alter your course 10 degrees north." The captain was angered; his command had been ignored. So he sent a second message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south, I am the captain!" Soon another message was received: "Alter your course 10 degrees north, I am seaman third class Jones." Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: "Alter your course 10 degrees south, I am a battleship." Then the reply came "Alter your course 10 degrees north, I am a lighthouse." (Paul Aiello, Jr.)

We can decide to listen to the Word of God, or we can decide to listen to the world. The Word of God is the unmoveable lighthouse, though, and we ignore it at our own peril.

Let's divide our study exactly as Paul did in our text. We will notice the role of the woman, the role of the man, the role of the children, and the role of the father.

The Christian Wife

ACTIVITY (to be done BEFORE reading the scripture text) - Pass out paper and pencils and have class participants answer the following question anonymously, only noting MAN or WOMAN at the top of the sheet:

QUESTION - What qualities make a good wife?

Review the sheets with the class, noting any differences between how men and women answered the question.

She Is A Christian, first of all.

Although applying Christian principles is ALWAYS a good thing, they work best when used by Christians.

If a woman is unsaved, she needs to get that settled first.

It does no good to have a "Christian" home, and then go to hell! Jesus said, *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36)* This applies to women, too. For the woman who is not saved, nothing else matters but getting that right.

Furthermore, an unsaved woman cannot truly understand what the Bible teaches about these things. cf. *1 Corinthians 2:14*

She Is Submissive

QUESTION - What does this mean?

ANSWER - In the Greek, this is the word *hupotasso* hoop-ot-as'-so; which, according to Strong's, means to subordinate; reflexively, to obey:--be under; obedience (obedient), put under, subdue unto, (be, make) subject (to, unto), be (put) in subjection (to, under), submit self unto.

QUESTION - What does this say about the superiority / inferiority of men and women?

QUESTION - How does this fit in with the world's view of the equality of women? What would the N.O.W. have to say about this verse?

READ the long quote in Appendix A. It gives a good summation of the Bible's teaching on submission.

- It is a voluntary submission.

Wives, submit yourselves... (Colossians 3:18, KJV)

It is very important to understand that submission is the WIFE'S responsibility. I have heard the phrase, "Man, you need to go home and get your wife under subjection." However, that is ridiculously unscriptural. There is nothing in the Bible that says the MAN plays a role in the submission of the wife. It is totally voluntary on her part, and it is up to her to decide whether she will be a wife according to the Biblical model.

QUESTION - Is this hard to do? Why?

READ - *Genesis 3:16; 4:17*. QUESTION - Do these verses shed any light on why submission is difficult for women?

Submission is part of the curse, as is the natural tendency to rebel against it. Note that the same words are used to compare the woman's attitude toward man in *Genesis 3:16* and the desire of sin to rule over Cain in *Genesis 4:17*.

- It is a total submission.

READ - *Ephesians 5:22-24*

QUESTION - What do these verses teach us about the extent of this submission?

- It is a targetted submission

QUESTION - Who is the wife to submit to?

QUESTION - Is there anything in the Bible that places a woman under submission to a man other than her husband?

QUESTION - What should be a woman's attitude toward other men?

- It is purposeful submission

QUESTION - Why is it important for wives to be in submission?

... it is fit in the Lord. (Colossians 3:18, KJV)

QUESTION - Of course, the question inevitably comes up: What about when the husband is unsaved? Am I to submit to him then?

ANSWER - Obviously there are times when submission will not be possible. One example would be when an unsaved or backslidden husband demands you do something sinful, criminal, or immoral. *"We ought to obey God rather than men."* However, other than such obvious exceptions, I believe the requirement of submission remains. It is the most powerful evangelistic tool the wife of an unsaved man has! cf. *1 Peter 3:1*

Wives, may I encourage you to prayerfully consider your role in the home. We have only looked at the area of submission, because that is the emphasis in our text. There are many other vital roles you play - lover, helper, companion, mother. We will talk about all of those in due time, as we work through the Bible. This week, though, may I challenge you to consider the implications of what we discussed today? We so desperately need Christian homes in America today. And a Christian home only exists where husbands and wives are working together according to the pattern set down for us in scripture.

QUOTE (Charles Haddon Spurgeon) - "It is both the way TO peace, and the way OF peace to submit one's whole self to God. Nor is it a difficult task to a true believer, but it is the desire of his heart, the pleasure of his life."

I would expand on Brother Spurgeon's quote by stating that, just as the submission of the believer to Christ is key to peace in the Christian life, so submission of wives to husbands is a key to peace in the Christian home.

The Christian Husband

ACTIVITY (to be done BEFORE reading the scripture text) - Pass out paper and pencils and have class participants answer the following question anonymously, only noting MAN or WOMAN at the top of the sheet:

QUESTION - What qualities make a good husband?

Review the sheets with the class, noting any differences between how men and women answered the question.

He Is A Christian, first of all.

Although applying Christian principles is ALWAYS a good thing, they work best when used by Christians.

If a man is unsaved, he needs to get that settled first.

It does no good to have a "Christian" home, and then go to hell! Jesus said, *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36)* For the man who is not saved, nothing else matters but getting that right.

Furthermore, an unsaved man cannot truly understand what the Bible teaches about these things. cf. *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV)*

He loves his wife.

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. (Colossians 3:19, KJV)

QUESTION - And so, the primary duty of the husband is to love his wife, just as the primary duty of the wife is to live in submission to her husband. What does it mean to "love your wives?"

QUESTION - What does the phrase "and be not bitter against them" mean? (The following quotes may help with the discussion.)

QUOTE (Matthew Henry) - "And they must not be bitter against them, not use them unkindly, with harsh language or severe treatment, but be kind and obliging to them in all things."

QUOTE (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown commentary) - "ill-tempered and provoking. Many who are polite abroad, are rude and bitter at home because they are not afraid to be so there."

Men are constructed in such a way (by God) that they need the respect and admiration (submission) of their wives. I think the Bible indicates that there is nothing a wife can do that will have a greater impact on her relationship with her husband than to simply and reverently submit to him. Likewise, women are constructed in such a way (again, by God), that they need to be loved. Absolutely nothing that we men can do will have a more profound impact on our relationship with her than to simply and totally and overwhelmingly LOVE HER. Love has a profound impact on a woman.

ILLUS - In 1976 Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme exploded on to every front page in America. She had pushed her way through a crowd and had tried to kill the President of the United States. She was 17 years old. Investigators found her proud that she was a follower of Charles Manson. The world knows Manson as a crazed killer who worked through his small, dedicated band of fanatical "disciples." News magazines began to dig into the background of this tragic young woman. Their reports found that Squeaky had felt like a misfit in her town, and so she wandered across the country until she reached California. There Manson met her and promised to take care of her. She went with him and was willing to kill and die for him. Reporters wanted to know, "Why would you give your life to a man like Manson?" I read her explanation in a magazine, and I have never been able to forget it. Squeaky explained that she had made a choice early in her teenage years. Here it is: "Whoever loves me first can have my life." Someone probably had loved Squeaky, but she was ready to give her life to whomever made her feel loved first. (Ron Hutchcraft, *Five Needs Your Child Must Have Met at Home*, Zondervan, 1995)

He loves his wife more than himself.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. (Ephesians 5:28, KJV)

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Ephesians 5:33, KJV)

QUESTION - The implication in these verses is that we men love ourselves. Is that so? What examples are there of this love for self?

There is a quote we hear often, "Look out for number one!" It is not a particularly Biblical quote in that we are to look out for one another, and put ourselves in a secondary role, but it is an accurate quote in that it reflects human nature. We do tend to love ourselves more than anything else.

QUESTION - Let me ask the men - how can we accomplish this? What practical and real steps can we take to ensure that we love our wives MORE THAN OURSELVES?

QUESTION - Let me ask the same question of the women - how can we accomplish this? What practical and real steps can we take to ensure that we love our wives MORE THAN OURSELVES?

He loves his wife more than his extended family.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. (Ephesians 5:31, KJV)

QUOTE (Matthew Henry) - "We are not to understand by this that a man's obligation to other relations is cancelled upon his marriage, but only that this relation is to be preferred to all others, there being a nearer union between these two than between any others, that the man must rather leave any of those than his wife."

ILLUS - The TV show "Everybody Loves Raymond" hilariously illustrates the problems that occur when a man does not "leave and cleave."

Notice that it is the MAN'S responsibility to ensure this happens. Men, never be a Raymond! Ensure your wife knows that she occupies the central place in your life, always.

He loves his wife like Christ loves the church.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; (Ephesians 5:25, KJV)

This thought amazes me. It describes in one simple sentence the depths and the breadth and the height of a man's responsibility to his wife. My love for her must match the love that Christ had for the church!

QUESTION - Help me describe this. How much did Christ love the church? What are some examples of times when Christ demonstrated love to the church where we, as husbands facing similar treatment from our wives, might struggle to demonstrate such love?

QUOTE (Chrysostom) - ""Thou hast seen the measure of obedience; now hear also the measure of love. Do you wish your wife to obey you, as the Church is to obey Christ? Then have a solicitude for her as Christ had for the Church (Eph 5:23, "Himself the Saviour of the body"); and "if it be necessary to give thy life for her, or to be cut in ten thousand pieces, or to endure any other suffering whatever, do not refuse it; and if you suffer thus, not even so do you do what Christ has done."

QUOTE (Barnes Notes) - "As he gave himself to suffer on the cross to save the church, so we are to be willing to deny ourselves and to bear toil and trial, that we may promote the happiness of the wife. It is the duty of the husband to toil for her support; to provide for her wants; to deny himself of rest and ease, if necessary, in order to attend on her in sickness; to go before her in danger; to defend her if she is in peril; and to be ready to die to save her. Why should he not be? If they are shipwrecked, and there is a single plank on which safety can be secured, should he not be willing to place her on that, and see her safe at all hazards to himself?"

QUESTION - Think of this in a very practical way. We live in a society which teaches us to leave our mate when we are not "compatible." We have no-fault divorces today which Christians avail themselves of MORE than does the world. Based on what we see here about the extent of love that the husband is to have toward the wife, what could the wife do to her husband which would give him an excuse stop loving her, or to leave her?

Homework Assignments

Women, after our discussion of the importance of submission, may I suggest that you find fifteen minutes this week and write down any areas in your marriage where submission is difficult. Share the list with God, and with your husband.

Men, find fifteen minutes this week and think about what it really means to love your wife. Find a sheet of paper and write "I love you" in 25 words or less, without using the words "I love you." Reading *1 Corinthians 13* may help. Share it with your wife.

Both of you, look at the list of suggested "Ways to Say I Love You" in Appendix B, and do at least one of them this week.

The Christian Child

The Christian Father

Appendix A. Submission of Women

When the woman was in her unfallen state God appointed her to be subordinate to the man (*Genesis 2:18*). This was a matter of rank and did not imply any inferiority. It was an honorable position.

So we see, first, a woman is a subordinate.

- This is a matter of rank.
- It is by God's appointment.

After the woman had sinned, in her fallen state, God imposed subjection on her (*Genesis 3:16*).

So second, a woman is in subjection.

- This is the matter of her husband's rule.
- It is imposed by God.

In the New Testament the wife is enjoined to come into submission (*Ephesians 5:22-24*) to her husband.

Third, a woman is to be submissive.

- This is the matter of inner attitude.
- It is to be voluntarily assumed.

The inner attitude is toward the subordination appointed and the subjection imposed in Genesis.

In extrabiblical Greek it was primarily a military term that denoted a rank under another. Literally the verb means "to arrange or to rank under." The word implies a rank subordinate to one who is in authority, to whom obedience and respect are due.

It does not imply an inferiority of person but only subordination in rank. As a person you will be no more inferior to your husband, than the citizen is to his government or Christ is to God. Yet the citizen is subordinate in rank to the governor. Christ in His humanity was subordinate to God the Father. You are to assume volitionally and voluntarily a rank or office under your husband in the administration of your home and family.

It does not justify suppression by your husband but does imply obedience to your husband. Submission does not stifle your leadership, creativity, and initiative as a wife. You may well wonder if it implies that you will make no decisions, offer no argument, participate in no discussions. Absolutely not. What a vanilla wife you would be! What kind of a helper is this? It is not only your right but also your responsibility to function as a partner in this partnership. Every Christian husband should consult his wife as his closest advisor and make decisions with her interests in view. Often responsibilities will be delegated to you requiring important decisions that must be made by you. And yet, when your husband makes decisions, you are responsible to obey. That is submission.

Some of us know wives who do obey but are not truly submissive. A third implication in our New Testament word is that of respect for your husband in his position

and for his decisions. A wife who obeys without respect is not in submission. You are to "revere" ("fear," *Ephesians 5:33*, same word as in v. 21) your husband. The church's reverence for Christ is your pattern. You may not agree with the decision in his position as head. The mother who enforces her husband's rules or disciplines, but lets her children know she does not agree, is not respecting her husband before her children. Such lack of respect is most often seen in the use of the tongue. Beware!

William J. McRae, *Preparing for Your Marriage*, (Zondervan Publ. House; Grand Rapids, MI, 1980), pp. 119-120

Appendix B. Ways to Say I Love You

Looking for a gift or just a unique way to say "I love you?" What do you give when his dresser is full of cologne and you're both on diets? When she thinks flowers die too soon, and you've already spent next month's paycheck? Here are 21 great inexpensive ways to tell the love of your life just how much you care.

- Make a homemade card with a picture of the two of you on the cover. Get ideas for a verse by spending a few minutes browsing through a card shop.
- Write a poem. It doesn't have to rhyme.
- Send a love letter listing the reasons "Why I love you so much."
- Pledge your love for a lifetime. Write it on calligraphy or design it on a desktop computer and print it out on parchment paper and have it framed.
- Plan a surprise lunch, complete with picnic basket, sparkling grape juice and goblets.
- Bake a giant cookie and write "I love you" with heart-shaped red hots or frosting. (Don't worry about the calories, it's not for eating!)
- Make a coupon book and include coupons for a back rub, a compromise when about to lose an argument, a listening ear when needed, and doing the dishes when the other cooks.
- Kidnap the car for a thorough washing and detailing.
- Design your personal crest combining symbols that are meaningful to both of you.
- Compose a love song.
- Arrange for someone to sing a favorite love song to you and your love when you're together.
- Call a radio station and have them announce a love message from you and make sure your love is listening at the right time.
- Make a big sign such as: "I Love You, Kristi. Love, Joe", and put it in front of your house or her apartment complex for the world to see.
- Buy favorite fruits that aren't in season, like a basket of strawberries or blueberries.
- Hide little love notes in the car, a coat pocket, or desk
- Place a love message in the "personal" section of the classified ads in your local paper.
- Florist flowers aren't the only way to say "I love you." Pluck a single flower and write a message about how its beauty reminds you of your love. For greater impact, have it delivered at work.
- Prepare a surprise candle light gourmet low-calorie dinner for two.
- Write the story of the growth of your relationship from your perspective, sharing your emotions and your joys. What a treasure!

Roles in Marriage

- Make a paperweight from a smooth stone, paint it, and write a special love message on it.
- Promise to change a habit that your love has been wanting you to change.

(Source unknown - found on the internet)