

Ephesians 5:18-24

The Power for Marriage (The marriage roles part 2)

Introduction: In the past weeks we have talked about various relationships and the issues that the commonly present. Today as we talk about roles in marriage this might be our most controversial study. So I'm going to begin by saying what I said in the introduction to this series. The Christian message, whether the Gospel itself, or the lifestyle that follows it has never been accepted by any culture carte blanc but has always been a challenge to both conservative and liberal people throughout the ages.

The Presbyterian book of common worship says, God "established marriage for the welfare and happiness of humankind." Marriage did not evolve in the late Bronze Age as a way to determine property rights as secular culture would lead us to believe. At the climax of the Genesis account of creation we see God bringing a woman and a man together to unite them in marriage. The Bible begins with a wedding (of Adam and Eve) and ends in the book of Revelation with a wedding (of Christ and the Church). Marriage is God's idea. It is certainly also a human institution, and it reflects the character of the particular human culture in which it is embedded. But the concept and roots of human marriage are in God's own action, and therefore what the Bible says about God's design for marriage is crucial....If marriage is instituted by God like the book of Genesis says, then God also regulates marriage and those who enter into marriage, or desire to should make every effort to understand and submit to his purposes for it....

As we've seen, God's Purpose for marriage is companionship, procreation, the common good, Christ likeness, and finally to be a picture to the world of God's never stopping, never giving up, un-breaking, always and forever love for his people.

I think as we talk roles again today it is important for us to keep those last two understandings in mind - marriage is meant to stretch us and to break our self-centeredness, it is intended to form us more into Christ image, and secondly, it is as it were, a story that we are putting on display, we each - husband and wife have a role, a part to play, ordained by God, to be a display of his own story.

1. Submission

1. As I've said before the Bible does not support chauvinism, nor does it support feminism. The Biblical teaching is that men and women are equal, yet with distinct roles and callings that compliment each other within the marriage relationship.
2. We clearly see in the Genesis record that the man is made first. Scripture always grounds it's teaching on roles in the creation account - Man was made first and then the woman...
 1. Made of the same stuff - she is his equal. Taken from his side, same flesh, same bone, but different sex.
 2. She is a helper fit for him in contrast to the animals just named by the man. A helper is one who supplies strength in the area that is lacking in "the helped." The term does not imply that the helper is either stronger or weaker than the one helped. "Fit for him" or "matching him" is not the same as "like him": a wife is not her husband's clone but complements him.
 3. The Biblical model for marriage is that of loving complementarity, where the husband and the wife are partners who value and respect each other and where the husband's loving leadership is met with the wife's willing submissive intelligent response.
 4. The path of Christian living is no different for the husband than for the wife. Each of us are "**submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ**" Both are called to follow Christ in humble and compassionate love, accepting rebuffs with forgiving grace.
 1. Tim Keller says, "Whether we are husband or wife, we are not to live for ourselves but for the other. And that is the hardest yet single most important function of being a husband or a wife in marriage....The word that Paul uses has it's origin in military, and in the greek it denoted a soldier submitting to an officer. Why? Because when you join the military you lose control over your schedule, over when you can take a holiday, over when you are going to eat, and even over what you eat. To be part of a whole, to become part of a greater unity, you have to surrender your independence. You must give up the rights to make decisions unilaterally. Paul says that this ability to deny your own rights, to serve and put the good of the whole over your own, is not instinctive; indeed, it's unnatural, but it is the very foundation of marriage" -Keller

5. Total Equality, mutual submission **but there are Roles**. The husband is called to serve as loving head and leader. The wife is called to support her husbands leadership by being submissive to her husband.

2. Submission isn't oppressive it's Christlike.

1. Throughout the gospels, especially the gospel of John, we constantly find Jesus speaking of His submission to God the Father.
2. **John 4:34 -“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”**
3. **5:19 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.**
4. **5:30 “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”**
5. **8:28 “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.”**
6. **12:49-50 “For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment— what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”**
7. If Jesus Christ chooses to submit to God the Father while being equal in worth and personhood, there seems to be no good reason why God could not have designed the husband-and-wife relationship in such a way that the wife is called to submit to the man while likewise being equal in worth and personhood.
8. Wives, this is really a wonderful opportunity for you to imitate Christ. As he submitted to the Father in all things, wives likewise submit to your husbands - be imitators of Christ.

3. Submission is Freedom

1. We really need to cast off the worlds ideas of biblical submission being chauvinistic/sexist, out of touch, or ignorant. Nothing could be further from the truth. Biblical submission should free a woman and enable her to be all that God has called her to be, especially in her marriage role.

2. Remember the same scriptures that teach submission also show us the excellent wife of Proverbs 31-This woman is completely trusted by her husband to do real estate deals, take care of the family estate, buy sell, she is well known in her community, she's respected by all... there is nothing about oppressive about this woman she is totally free to be.

4. Why Does the Wife submit?

1. The wife does not submit because she is mentally, spiritually, or emotionally inferior, but because of the way that God has ordered it from Creation.
 1. Paul in 1 Corinthians says, **“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife^[a] is her husband, and the head of Christ is God....For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” -1 Cor 11:3, 8-9**
2. The wife does not submit because her husband is necessarily such a great loving leader either (though practically that helps), but she does it out of “reverence or fear of the Lord,” as both Paul and Peter state.
 1. Tim Keller says, “To be in the fear of the Lord is not to be scared of the Lord, even though the Hebrew word has overtones of respect and awe. ‘Fear’ in the Bible means to be overwhelmed, to be controlled by something. To fear the Lord is to be overwhelmed with wonder before the greatness of God and his love. It means that, because of his bright holiness and magnificent love, you find him ‘fearfully beautiful.’ That is why the more we experience God’s grace and forgiveness, the more we experience a trembling awe and wonder before the greatness of all that he is and has done for us. Fearing him means bowing before him out of amazement at his glory and beauty. Paul speaks of the love of Christ ‘constraining’ us (2 Corinthians 5:14).”
 1. What is it that most motivates and moves you? Is it the desire for success? The fear of failure? The need to prove yourself to your parents? The need for respect from your peers? We come into our marriages driven by all kinds of fears, desires, and needs. Paul says that if any of these things is a greater controlling influence on you than the reality of God’s love for you, you will not be in a position to serve your husband or wife

unselfishly. Only out of the fear of the Lord Jesus will we be liberated to serve one another.

2. "Wives do not submit in order to satisfy a husband's vanity or to promote his reputation. Neither do they submit to show how godly they are, nor to avoid conflict, nor to impress neighbors, nor to manipulate their husbands, and not even because she thinks she is wise. She submits because of her relationship with and trust in God" -Slaughter

1. **Submission does not mean agreeing with everything your husband says and does.**
2. **Submission does not mean leaving your brain or your will at the wedding altar.**
3. **Submission does not mean avoiding every effort to change a husband.**
4. **Submission does not mean putting the will of the husband before the will of Christ.**
5. **Submission does not mean that a wife gets her personal, spiritual strength primarily through her husband.**
6. **Finally submission does not mean that a wife is to act out of fear.**
7. "Submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts. It's the disposition to follow a husband's authority and an inclination to yield to his leadership. It is an attitude that says, "I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for things and lead with love. I don't flourish in the relationship when you are passive and I have to make sure the family works." -John Piper

5. Where do we go wrong?

1. As we read in the beginning of time the man and his wife dwelt in the paradise of God, they were at perfect peace with God, with nature, with one another. There was absolute harmony and shalom.. It tells us that the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. This speaks of the trust, and transparency that once naturally existed in human relationships, especially in marriage.
2. As we go on to read here in the pages of scripture the man and the woman rebelled against God and the curse of sin has brought all sorts of disharmony It says that immediately their eyes were open

and they knew they were naked and they sewed fig leaves to cover their nakedness. When God shows up to question them they are hiding because of their nakedness and when God inquires what happened the man and the woman blame one another. Here we see the immediate results of sin on these perfect relationships the breakdown of the trust and peace that God gave to mankind - There is disharmony between Mankind and God, mankind and nature, and mankind with itself. There is suspicion where there was once trust, and self justification where there was once vulnerability....

1. To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

- Genesis 3:16

3. Nancy Guthrie comments - "She was made to be her husband's companion and helper. But now she will fight against the desire to dictate to him and dominate him. Rather than look to her husband for guidance, she'll seek to manipulate him. And rather than the unfettered one-flesh intimacy they once knew, their relationship will be riddled with self-centered strife." Might I add, instead of his loving leadership and protection he will domineer and exploit the woman...
4. This is the tension that we experience in our marriages, in our relationships, in our families. As we saw last week God has created marriage for companionship, procreation, the common good, holiness, and as a picture and foretaste of his love for his people. This is obviously idealistic, because while the scripture says all this it also recognizes the presence of sin, the hardhearted selfish nature of human beings, and so on..
5. It is my personal experience that the wife especially has to fight against this tendency to want to harshly criticize, insult or take over leading of the marriage, but scripture clearly teaches the leadership of the man in marriage - therefore what is needed is not take over and harsh criticism but encouragement and exhortation from our wives to do and be what God has called us to be.
 1. Husbands and wives we need to stop criticizing each other and start affirming each other, we need to stop hurting each other and start helping each other.
 2. Wives, God has given you the opportunity to support and encourage your husband like nobody else. Do

you encourage him, do you make him want to lead your home, are you always comparing him, and being exasperated with him?? Are you affirming him and his abilities, his efforts, are you be a help mate or another weight to carry?? People can say all sorts of nice things or critical things about me, but if my wife says those things it has the power to either destroy me, or to give me life.

3. “It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.” – C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory
4. We are helping one another towards the glory of Christ, everlasting splendor - that is our calling to commit to what we will be one day, to help each other in that sanctifying process. We are partners in the process of sanctification.

Conclusion: The Husbands authority (like Jesus’ authority over us) is never used to please himself but only to serve the interests of his wife. Headship does not mean a husband simply “makes all the decisions,” nor does it mean he gets his way in every disagreement. Why? Jesus never did anything to please himself (Romans 15:2-3). A servant-leader must sacrifice his wants and needs to please and build up his partner Ephesians 5:21

A wife is never to be merely compliant but is to use her resources to empower. She is to be her husbands most trusted friend and counselor, as

he is hers. The “completion” that embracing the other entails involves a lot of give and take. To truly complement each other means husband and wife need to hear each other out, make their arguments. Completion is hard work and involves loving contention with affection until you sharpen, enrich, and enhance each other. She must bring every gift and resource that she has to the discussion, and he must, as any wise manager, know when to allow her expertise to trump his own, less well-informed opinion.

Lastly I want to say -A wife is not to give her husband unconditional obedience. No human being should give any other human being unconditional obedience. As Peter said in the book of Acts, “We must obey God rather than men.” This would not only apply to sin that a husband might lead his wife into but also in cases of physical abuse. In these cases the “strong help” the wife should exercise is to love and forgive her husband - just as Christ has forgiven her of her sins, but she should also have him arrested. It is never kind or loving to anyone to make it easy for him or her to do wrong..

We’ve talked about how the roles of husband and wife are not in competition but are complimentary. We’ve seen how submission is something that every Christian is called to - not only to the Lord but to one another. But at the same time the scripture clearly says, that the husband is the head or leader and the wife is the helper or the one who submits... Does the husband have actual authority over his wife?? The answer is yes. The husband can overrule his wife if he is sure that her choice would be destructive to her or to the family... He does not use his headship selfishly... if we are both seeking to love and serve one another selflessly than a stalemate will be rare in marriage, but when there is the final decision the right and therefore the greater responsibility falls to the husband..