

THE ROLES OF MARRIAGE

Ephesians 5:22-33

DOM INTRO

EM INTRO:

DOM:

- Books...
- Marriage Counseling...

EM:

Ephesians 5:21-33

'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything...

DOM:

...For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault...

...In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body...

EM:

...As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.'

Pray

DOM:

- Biblically speaking, marriage is life long covenant between a man a woman, and what we see today is that each one in the marriage plays a role.
- Today, we are looking at GOD's intended design for gender roles in marriage; how sin has corrupted those roles; and how Christ has come to redeem those roles.
- Only then, can we move on to the taboo concepts of authority and submission.

- Whatever you believe about gender roles, it is unavoidable that men and women are different. If you don't believe me, get married and it will become abundantly clear.
- Let's give space to consider how God may have designed these distinct roles for OUR good — even to bring healing and flourishing in marriage.

EM:

- When talking about gender roles in marriage, we need to start at the beginning.
- The first mention of gender is found in **Genesis 1:26** "In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them".
- Right after this, God commands them BOTH to be fruitful and multiply.
- This task of filling the Earth with new human life, is something that could only happen with BOTH genders together.
- Right off the bat, we see equality and distinction.
- Both were **necessary** and both **unique**.
- **We also see the idea of headship and submission, introduced immediately.**
- After Adam is created, he becomes the **physical source of life** for Eve, and is given the responsibility of naming her.
- Both of these elements lay the basis for the New Testament statements about a husband's "headship."
- **This next part sometimes gets misunderstood:**
- Despite giving authority to the man, the woman is never described in the expected way—as an inferior. (see Genesis 2:18)
- In **Genesis 2:18**, she is called "**a helper suitable for him**", but this doesn't simply mean "assistant".
- The word for "helper" is the Hebrew word 'ezer', and is almost ALWAYS used to describe GOD Himself, or sometimes "strong military help".
- The biblical role of 'helper' is more accurately defined as one who makes up what is lacking in strength.
- We as women have the gift of being a "**strong and necessary helper**".
- The word "**suitable**" would also be better translated "like opposite".
- "[Male and female are] two pieces of a puzzle that fit together because they are not exactly alike, nor randomly different, but they are differentiated such that together they can create a complete whole." (**Timothy and Kathy Keller - The Meaning of Marriage**)
- note: you're NOT married, then Jesus is the other half of that puzzle.

DOM:

- So, God created both sexes, equal and essential, but different and unique. And it was good.
- But, then... **Gen. 3**, when they both sin against God, all of this begins to deteriorate.
- Rather than their otherness becoming a source of completion for one another (how it was intended), it becomes an occasion for oppression, exploitation, and division.
- After this “The woman remains dependent and desirous of her husband, but it turns into an idolatrous desire, and the husband’s protection and love become a selfish lust and exploitation.” (**Kathy Keller**)
- God created the gender roles, in marriage, to be beautiful and harmonious.
- Then sin distorted these roles bringing dominance to authority, and degradation to submission.
- JESUS COMES TO REDEEM BOTH.
- **Jesus redefines it ALL.**
- You CANNOT take a words like “headship” or “submission”, extract them from the gospel and life of Jesus, and then define them as the world defines them.
- If you are going to talk about these things, you need to talk about them like the Bible talks about them, and DO THEM like the Bible says to do them.

EM:

- THANKFULLY, the Bible gives us a model for both submission AND authority, in the life of Jesus.
- To be a follower of Jesus, means we follow the WAY of Jesus.
- **So, what is the WAY of Jesus?**
- First...
- **SUBMISSION**
- **Eph. 5:22** “Wives submit to your husbands in all things”
- Let’s see what submission looks like in the life of CHRIST:
- **Philippians 2:5-11** “You [all] must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges he took the humble position of a servant, and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...”
- Jesus took on the most **submissive** role—that of a servant who dies in His master’s service.
- **He shed his divine privileges, without becoming any less divine.**
- And THEN, the Father EXALTS Him to the highest place, giving Him the name above all names.

- 1. In the Trinity, Jesus is **equal** with the Father
- 2. The submission of Jesus to the Father is **voluntary**.
 - It was a GIFT to the Father, as our submission, in marriage is a gift we VOLUNTARILY offer, not something that is coerced from us.

DOM:

- A wife's submission in marriage, is a voluntary act that she offers (or not). But it's up to her.
- Just like Jesus doesn't DEMAND we follow Him, we don't demand anything of other people, especially not our wives.

EM:

- 3. Jesus' voluntary submission actually **led to His glory**.
- In *The Meaning of Marriage* they call this the "dance of the trinity"
 - "The Son defers to his Father, taking the subordinate role. The Father accepts the gift, but then exalts the Son to the highest place. Each wishes to please the other; each wishes to exalt the other. Love and honor are given, accepted, and given again".
(Timothy and Kathy Keller — *The Meaning of Marriage*)
 - **And we were created, male and female, to display this mystery.**
- So, if Jesus submitting Himself as a servant was not an assault on His dignity and divinity, but actually led to His glory, then I should not be offended when God asks me to play out the "Jesus role" in my marriage.
- The Son takes a submitted role, and in that He shows, not His **weakness**, but His **greatness**.
- In marriage, there is no inequality of ability or dignity. We are simply created different, in order to image to the triune nature of God. And we do this through loving, courageous submission, and through loving, self-sacrificing authority.
- I want mention that playing the "Jesus role", or laying down your life, or dying to self, means that you die to the BROKEN and SINFUL parts of who you are, not the good and unique parts.
- Your marriage needs your unique voice, ideas, and contributions.
- My submission is a choice. And **in** this choice, my worth doesn't go away.
- I am able to hold both my worth AND the worth of my husband, at the same time.
- Also, we want to make sure that it is clear that a wife is not to give her husband unconditional obedience.
- In fact, no human being should give any other human being unconditional obedience, as we see in **Acts 5:29**. (We're to please God rather than man)

- For instance, if a husband asks his wife to do something that God forbids, you need to say, "I love you, I am here as a strong supportive helper, but I will not support this."
- Or, if a husband is beating his wife or kids, the "strong help" that the wife should provide is to forgive him in her heart, but to have him arrested.
- It is never kind or loving to anyone to make it easy for him or her to sin.

DOM:

- HEADSHIP

- As important as it is for us to understand that a role of submission is not demeaning (or dangerous) when played out in the context of a Biblical marriage, it is equally as important for us to understand that headship is not a role of superiority, but of servanthood.
 - *Touring / Gold Status*
- In our world, we are accustomed to seeing those who appear to have higher "status", as being the ones who should receive the perks.
- We can therefore read words like "head" or "leader" or "authority" and read INTO them "privilege", "preference" or "benefits".
- **But, just like Jesus redefined and restored the true meaning of submission, He also redefined and restored the true meaning of headship and authority.**
- **John 13:3-5, 12-14** "Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him..."
 - The washing of other's feet was the job of the lowest servant in the house.
 - It was SO low that no-one would have even expected the DISCIPLES to do this for one another, certainly not Jesus, who had ALL AUTHORITY.
 - But Jesus came to restore EVERYTHING back to its original purpose, including the purpose of authority:
- The passages continues...
- "...After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. Since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."
- Jesus was speaking to the very men who would eventually have AUTHORITY in the NT Church, so He made sure to demonstrate what that authority should look like.
- In the dance of the trinity, the greatest is not the one who makes Himself great and takes on the perks, but who makes Himself the least, and gives up His life.
- Eph. 5:22, calls the husband the "Head".
- **The husband is given "authority" in a marriage, but that authority only works, when it looks like the authority of Jesus.**

- In washing the disciples' feet, Jesus demonstrated, in the most dramatic way that, unlike the world where leadership means others serve you, authority in the Kingdom means that you serve others.
- **And to what end is this servant kind of leadership? What is the goal?**
 - **The glory of the other.**
- **Ephesians 5:25-27** "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to **make her** holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to **present her** to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish."
- "The husband's authority (like the Son's 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." **(Timothy and Kathy Keller - *The Meaning of Marriage*)**
- The first job that God gave Adam, in the garden, was to cause things to flourish.
- **Gentleman, it is our job to do whatever we can, to cause flourishing in our wives.**

EM:

- When I know that THAT is what my husband is called to, the idea of submission is not so daunting anymore.
- Because:
- In Jesus, we see all the "dictatorship" of authority laid to rest, and all of the humility of submission glorified.
- We also see that:
- Christ's submission didn't lead to making Him insignificant or small. It led to His ultimate glorification. Nor did Christ's authority lead to Him dominating His people, but to giving up His life for his people, in sacrificial love.
- **In marriage, we BOTH get to play this Jesus role.**

DOM:

But...

WHAT ABOUT DISAGREEMENTS? WHO MAKES THE DECISION THEN?

- If we're both laying down our lives, what happens when there's a stalemate?
- It seems that the Bible puts that responsibility on the man, but in the vast majority of cases, a disagreement in a decision should be resolved by each one trying to give the other his or her pleasure.
- "A head can only overrule his spouse if he is sure that her choice would be destructive to her, or to the family." **(Timothy and Kathy Keller - *The Meaning off Marriage*)**

- Our connection and oneness should be so vital that we will talk, listen, and pray until we can either **find common ground**, OR **humble ourselves enough to defer to the other**.
- **Pride is concerned with WHO is right. Humility is concerned with doing WHAT is right.**
- And “doing what is right” is preferring my spouse:
- **Philippians 2:3-4 “Don’t be selfish... Be humble, thinking of others [spouse] as better than yourselves.”**
- Fellas, we should INVITE THIS.
- Remember, Adam, when he was SINLESS, was incomplete without his wife. How much more, must this be true for us?
- God designed it that way.
- **WHY DOES THE MAN “GET TO LEAD”?**
- First of all, as a man, I don’t see this as a “GET TO”. To lead like Jesus, where everything is always for the benefit of the other, seems impossible to me.
- But, to answer the question... **we don’t really know why the man is given this role.**
 - Why was Jesus (the Son), the one who submitted and served? Why wasn’t it the Father?
- There’s no implication that God laid out roles like this because men are somehow more equipped to lead. That’s is not biblical, or even practical.
- The Bible doesn’t give us a reason, but it IS CLEAR that the roles do NOT communicate hierarchy or status.

EM:

- **3 brief, final thoughts**
- **1. Marriage is a two way street (red + blue = purple)**
- The purple (marriage) will only be happy and healthy when both red and blue have an invested interest in the other’s **well being, restoration, healing, and ultimate glory.**
- It’s not about you telling him or her how THEY need to change in order to make YOU feel better.
- You’ve got to figure out how YOU NEED to change in order to make THEM feel better, and vice versa.
- **And what do you do if the other person doesn’t do that or want that.**
 - Because both roles are SERVANT roles, we don’t have to wait for permission or reciprocation.
 - We don’t let ourselves become a **doormats**, but we should just start DOING it.

- We can also, **humbly and gently**, share our desire, with the other, for them to contribute to the health of the purple (marriage).
- **Quick shout out to the single ladies who desire to be married...**
 - If you want to accept gender-defined roles in marriage, you need to find a husband who will truly be a **servant-leader**, to match **you** as a strong helper.

DOM:

- **2. We commit to growing ourselves, while exercising and extending grace to the other.**
- We all come into marriage with strengths and weaknesses.
- Some men, for instance, may need to work more on the “leading” part of servant leadership. Others may need to work on the “servant” part of servant leadership.

EM:

- Some women may need to work more on the “strong” part of “strong supportive helper”, while others may need to work on the “supportive” part of “strong supportive helper”.

DOM:

- As we lean into our God given gender roles in marriage, we can begin to nurture those weaker abilities, for the benefit of our spouse.

EM:

- **3. We need the power and leading of the Holy Spirit.**
- While the PRINCIPLE of gender defined roles in marriage, is clear, the Bible gives almost no SPECIFIC DETAILS on how this plays out practically, which means that we **must** learn to hear the Spirit’s voice and follow Him in order to know how honor and express this in our individual marriages.
- Also, as we look at Jesus as our example of both submission and headship, it becomes VERY CLEAR that we can’t do this without supernatural power.
- We need the Holy Spirit

DOM (closing)

- Offenses... pursue connection...
- Vertical restoration precedes horizontal healing...
- Each has fallen short. Let’s run to God today, not from Him.