

Discovering our purpose

The Role of the Woman in Marriage
(Eph. 5:23-32)

Intro: Just as God planned the role of man in marriage to be the head of the home and to lovingly lead and provide for it, so God planned the role of woman also. Let's consider her role in the home.

The wife is instructed by God to submit to her husband's leadership.

Eph. 5:23

Be subject means “to place oneself under the authority or leadership of another”

“As to the Lord” is a simile of comparison. It says “submit” to your husband as you would to Jesus himself.

In everything, Eph. 5:24 This may also explain “as to the Lord”. This submission is total.

Col. 3:18 “as is fitting in the Lord”

Even the terms for marriage in the OT are based on the concept of male leadership and female submission:

It is interesting that in the OT the wife is said to be “tachat ish” (“under a husband”), Num. 5:29. In fact, the NT has the similar concept “hupandros” (Rom. 7:2, literally an “under husband woman”

Also the OT terms for husband is suggestive. It is “baal” indicated the “lordship” or “possessor” of the husband over the wife.

The Bible reveals three keys reasons for this relationship:

Because the man was created first (1 Tim. 2:13)

Because the woman was made from man (1 Cor. 11:8)

God made the woman’s role known in the creation itself. Being made from man’s rib, she was to see him as the head of her. Just as Adam said, “this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”.

Because the woman was made for the man (1 Cor. 11:9)

Thus God had said, “I will made a helper suitable for him”.

Submission is not a punishment for the woman; but the role for which she was created..

Gen. 3:16 is often misconstrued as making subjection a punishment for the woman.

Eve's punishment was increased pain in child-bearing. Yet, God encouraged her with the realization that she would her punishment would not keep her from the blessings of marriage: 1) the enjoyment of her husband’s love 2) the benefits of his dominion over her.

The principle of headship was not established because of Eve's sin, though it might have exonerated God's will in the arrangement he had already decreed (Cf. 1 Tim. 2:14).

In our last lesson on the family, we showed how commonly in Scripture God tells one group of persons to submit to another. In each case, where God has assigned headship or dominion, the one in leadership is to exercise that right or authority to lead with the needs of those under him in consideration and in a way that makes them sense the love and appreciation of the one who leads. The right to "rule" is the obligation to "care" for those under rule. In this sense, submission never implies inferiority. In fact, it exalts the woman just as it exalts the church!

This submission is modeled after the relationship between Christ and the church.

Eph. 5:22

Just as the man must look to the analogy of Christ in learning how to lead his home; so the wife must look to the teaching concerning the church to see how she should submit to her husband. The man has a perfect example of how to be the head of his family. The woman must look to the church (an imperfect example); yet she is to see the church in its ideal response to Christ as the pattern for her relationship to her husband. How does the church show its submission to Christ?

Respecting him as our Lord based on his sacrifice for us

Submitting to his will with the realization that it is best for us

So the wife must do to her husband:

Honor him as her head

With respect, v. 33 "phobetai"

In a way that even a pagan husband might be led to the Lord by the wife's attitude, 1 Pet. 3:1-2

Submit or obey him. This is not the idea of sheer authoritarian submission, but cooperation that acknowledges his selfless love for her and also it conveys the idea of moral suasion.

As to the Lord, Eph 5:22

Just as Abraham modeled true headship over his family, so Sarah modeled true submission (1 Pet. 3:5-6)

By her actions

By her speech

The woman is able to submit to her husband not only because she knows it is God's will but because she "trusts" her husband to love her as himself.

It may be that some women have difficulty with submission because of a lack of trust in men in general. Perhaps they transfer to their husband the abusive authoritarian power that they saw in their fathers. Perhaps their own husbands exercise their rule with abusive power and this makes trusting them difficult.

If a woman truly believes in her husband's love, then she can submit "without fear" to use Peter's words. And when she does, she may find rest in this role (See Ruth 3:1)

The wife shows her submission by serving as her husband's helper.

Woman was made to be man's "helper" (Gen. 2:18)

Every Biblical passage that defines the woman's activities as wife show her to use those unique gifts God has given her to be the fitting complement to the man, assisting him in life.

1 Tim. 5:14, Tit. 2:4-5

Love their husbands and be subject to their husbands

Bear children & love their children

Keep house and be a worker at home

**Give enemy no occasion for reproach; be sensible,
pure, kind that the word be not dishonored**

The worthy woman of Prov. 31 exemplifies all these qualities.

As woman accepts and fills this role she is of great worth to her husband. She not ever feel inferior or less a person by her devotion to these activities; for this is the role for which the Lord suited her.

Conclusion: When the man leads with love and the woman submits to him in respect, a beautiful harmony and a mutual blessing come to a couple. They may face life and set the course of their joined lives in harmony and peace. Each fulfills the position for which he/she is physically and psychologically prepared by God. Each is made to feel a great sense of value and worth as they contribute to the relationship. And each will find their greatest happiness in fulfilling the role God has given them.

No where in this discussion has either the man or the women been told to make their spouse do what God asks. Instead, he only says to each of them to be the person that God wants them to be. That should be enough for any Christian man or woman. Let us seek to make our homes modeled after Christ and the church; for only in this way do we fulfill the purpose of God for our lives in marriage.