

TRUST God's Designated Roles

Scripture References

Marriage Like Christ and the Church

²² Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as [a service] to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church, Himself being the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives should be subject to their husbands in everything [respecting both their position as protector and their responsibility to God as head of the house].

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives [seek the highest good for her and surround her with a caring, unselfish love], just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify the church, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word [of God], ²⁷ so that [in turn] He might present the church to Himself in glorious splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy [set apart for God] and blameless. ²⁸ Even so husbands should and are morally obligated to love their own wives as [being in a sense] their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own body, but [instead] he nourishes and protects and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members [parts] of His body. ³¹ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be joined [and be faithfully devoted] to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³² This mystery [of two becoming one] is great; but I am speaking with reference to [the relationship of] Christ and the church. ³³ However, each man among you [without exception] is to love his wife as his very own self [with behavior worthy of respect and esteem, always seeking the best for her with an attitude of lovingkindness], and the wife [must see to it] that she respects and delights in her husband [that she notices him and prefers him and treats him with loving concern, treasuring him, honoring him, and holding him dear].

Ephesians 5:22-33 AMP

... submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Ephesians 5:21 NKJV

Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you."

Genesis 3:16 NLT

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.

Genesis 4:7 NKJV

Notes and Highlights

God's Design for the Parts We Play

ROLES

- For any human interaction to work, each person involved in that interaction, ideally, should know what is expected of them, what they contribute to the interaction, as well as what they can expect of the other person(s) and what the other person(s) will contribute to the interaction.
- We see that in our families, in school, with our friends, in day-to-day activities (bank, grocery, gasoline station, etc.)
- In a covenant relationship, that is, marriage, God designed for both the husband and the wife to have specific roles.
 - The husband provides the primary leadership in the home.

- The husband is given the huge task of loving his wife unconditionally, just as Christ loves His Church unconditionally. He is to love his own wife as he loves his own body.
- The husband must seek the highest good for his wife and surround her with loving care.
- The husband is to care for his wife as Christ cares for His Bride, the Church - selflessly, sacrificially.
- Husband's role is to build up his wife spiritually just as Christ sanctifies the church, and he is spiritually accountable before God.
- The wife is the helpmeet or "suitable help" - supports husband's leadership.
- The wife is meant to respect the husband's role as protector and his being responsible to God for the couple/family unit.

HIERARCHY

We readily accept both the presence and necessity of having a set hierarchy in human interactions like at our job. However, when it comes to marriage, this suddenly becomes either a "hot button" topic, or even, taboo (something we don't talk about in church). God's design for the hierarchy in the home is often debated and very much misunderstood.

- It is very crucial that we do not misunderstand what the Bible says - NOT about women having no voice in the family, NOT about being a doormat, NOT about tolerating abuse, NOT about being in any way a second-class citizen
- Ephesians 5:22 is NOT about husbands telling their wives what to do and the wives having to do whatever their husbands say. This passage (Ephesians 5:22-33) is really about husbands having to love their wives just as Christ loves the church. Then, just as we trust God, whom we know loves us unconditionally, and obey God's directions for us, so wives should trust their God-fearing husbands to direct them out of love and concern for their wives' well-being.
- "The word used for submission is different from the word used for 'obey' ([Ephesians] 6:1). Submission is voluntarily yielding in love. It is a beautiful characteristic, and it is clear from the overall heading, 'submit to one another' ([Ephesians] 5:21), that Paul expects mutual submission." ¹
- It is NOT about having traditional roles - husband earns income, wife stays at home. Specific roles and contributions may vary according to each spouse's strengths, abilities, and gifts, but each couple needs to decide on who will do what ahead of time - DECIDE DON'T SLIDE ².
- The couple are **joint leaders** of the family unit, however, just like in an effective business unit, there has to be one person who is ultimately held accountable. It is important to remember that the biblical relationship is based on mutual respect and care for each other, seeking to nurture each other.
- Christ is accountable to God for sanctifying His Bride (the Church), the husband/father is accountable for looking after the well-being of his wife and children and the wife is accountable for ensuring she nourishes the marital relationship and her family so that her husband is able to carry out his responsibilities with her encouragement, help and support.
- The husband's role in God's designated family hierarchy is like that of the captain of a ship. While he and his wife are both co-leaders of the family, ultimately, it is the husband, as the head of the household, whom God holds accountable and responsible for the family's overall well-being.

¹ From the *Bible in One Year* reading for 27 September, commentary on Ephesians 5:8-33 by Nicky Gumbel ([Seven Ways You Please the Lord | Bible in One Year](https://bibleinoneyear.org/en/classic/270/) <https://bibleinoneyear.org/en/classic/270/>)

² From the book *Fighting for Your Marriage* by Markman, Stanley & Blumberg, 3rd ed, Chapter 1 Five Keys for a great Relationship, pp 21-22

Why we struggle with God's Designated Hierarchy

- Goes back to the corruption of God's design (Genesis 3:16) where instead of seeking to uplift each other, we "look out for number one" or try to self-protect.
 - "Desire" – the Hebrew word used only occurs in Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7.
 - This Hebrew word, translated as "desire", is a derivation from another that means "to run after or over"
 - Some interpret this to indicate that a woman's desire will be to rule over her husband.
 - After the fall, instead of mutual respect and working together as God originally intended, couples have been struggling for control.
- It is too easy to get stuck or "hung up" on a single verse, such as Ephesians 5:22. We need to understand that verse in context of the entire passage as well as in the context of the whole bible.
- In Ephesians 5:21, we are instructed to submit to one another. This is a general instruction for all believers, both male and female. This means we should be considerate of others and be willing to take into account their point of view or their role. Doing so will make interactions proceed more positively.
- God is the God of order and not confusion. Male and female are created equal in the sight of God, but in a marital relationship, each spouse plays a unique role to carry out a function and to accomplish their goals as a couple.

Resolving leadership conflicts in the family

- Sometimes the husband is either not willing or not ready to step up and lead the family unit. First, the husband must be willing to assume leadership consistently. Then, the couple can seek help from their pastor or from marriage coaches to help them restore the proper balance of authority in the home as per God's design.
- For those who are not yet married, but are in a developing relationship, it is important to observe whether or not the man will be able to provide godly leadership.
- Go back to scripture. Make sure your relationship is based on what the bible teaches.
- Take it to God. Pray for God to guide the husband, instead of chiding or nagging. The wife needs to trust God to take her husband in hand so that he can provide the right leadership for the family.
- Sometimes the wife will need to temporarily assume leadership to serve her husband's and her family's best interests. Think of the example in 1 Samuel 25:2-39, wherein Abigail had to act quickly to counteract her husband's rash decision which would have brought death to many in their family.
- When the wife feels that her husband is not making the right godly decisions, arguing about them will not solve anything. We can't change people or their minds by bad-mouthing them or giving them the "silent treatment". The solution? Go over his head, straight to "The Boss". The wife takes the issue and/or the situation to God, who is her husband's head, and prays that God will speak to her husband, and that God will lead her husband to make the necessary changes. Instead of chiding or nagging, a godly wife "takes it to the Lord in prayer".
- Role of the Church in helping couples be in unity – it is our privilege and our responsibility to instruct how God's institution of matrimony should be upheld. Trusting God's designated roles and His given hierarchy does not come naturally. We need to help couples as true oneness only comes supernaturally.

Importance of Trust and Unity

ONENESS

- Each couple should talk things through and try to come to a mutual agreement.

- Decisions are to be made as a team.
- When there is no unity about key decisions, don't move forward. Wait until you, as a couple, can come to an amicable compromise. God is not in a hurry and He can fix any mistakes made.
- God's design is that the "two become one" – a profound, provocative, interesting concept. Coming to mutual agreement is a form of oneness.
- When a couple is so closely knit together that they can mutually agree on key decisions, that is a beautiful instance of oneness.
- Sometimes, oneness may mean that even if a wife disagrees with her husband, she will support his decisions, respecting his role as head of the household, with both of them being subject to the Lord.
- Count the cost before entering into a romantic relationship. Are you really willing to enter into "oneness"? You can't live parallel lives – don't be roommates.

FINANCES

- Married couples need 'oneness' in their finances as well. No longer "his" and "her" money, but always "our" money, so as not to create division.
- When one spouse makes a financial decision without the other spouse's knowledge or consent, that will create a rift in the relationship.
- When spouses think of "my money" vs. "your money", that shows a lack of trust. It is a self-preservation mechanism.

BE EACH OTHER'S CHAMPIONS

- God's design is that husband and wife come together for each other and to be each other's champions.
- Stand by each other's decisions. Back each other up.

TRUST

- The wife can trust in God's designated hierarchy, in which God totally holds the husband accountable for loving his wife selflessly and sacrificially, just as Christ did. As a Bible-believing Christian, the wife needs to trust God enough and believe that God does know what is best for her.
- When the husband trusts God, his wife, in turn, can trust her husband as he trusts in God to lead them.

Good News: Jesus Christ is the Solution

- The good news is that Jesus came to make us whole, even in our relationships. Jesus Christ can fix what Adam and Eve messed up, and He can help us mend our own mistakes. When we invite Jesus into our relationship, He can help us make it work the way God originally intended it to.
- It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that our relationships can be healed, mended, and redeemed. There will still be struggles and problems, but ultimately God will lead us to victory.

Resources

Primary resource

the Holy Bible – as the ultimate source of 100% God's Truth.

Other resources

Fighting for Your Marriage by Howard Markman, Scott Stanley and Susan Blumberg.

www.BibleInOneYear.org