

# BIBLICAL ROLE OF A HUSBAND

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## **WELCOME**

I am glad you picked up this booklet. Perhaps you are a man considering marriage and you want to understand “what you are getting into.” Perhaps you are a married man, and you know your marriage could be better. Therefore, you are seeking to grow in your role as a husband. As we look at the passages in the Bible setting out the responsibilities of a husband, it might take your breath away. However, I believe it will also excite you as you come to understand God’s purposes in marriage. And guess what? It’s not all about you. It’s not even all about you and your wife.

## **PRIMARY GOAL**

As of the writing of this booklet, I have been a Biblical counselor for 15 years. What we stress to all our counselees is that the counselee’s primary goal in life is to please and glorify God. Our role as Biblical counselors is to help our counselee see what pleasing God looks like in his or her particular circumstances or role. For a husband, his primary goal remains the same: To please God by becoming more like Jesus in growing measure in his role as a husband. His prima-

ry goal should not be to change his wife or to have an easy home life. Also, when we teach our counselees or our church body about the roles of husband and wife, we like to teach the role of a husband first. The reason is that teaching a woman about Biblical submission and the other roles of a wife is hard teaching. In our flesh, none of us like the idea of being in submission to someone else. So, we have found that teaching on the role of the wife is easier once the wife and husband understand what God expects of a husband.

As well we also instruct each spouse to pay attention to what God expects of the other spouse (be it the husband or the wife), and what God does NOT expect from the other spouse. We do this because as a spouse in a one flesh relationship a spouse should seek to make it easier, not harder, for the other spouse to please God by fulfilling the role God has for him or her. That is what each spouse will be held accountable for before the Lord. Therefore, a wife will not be held accountable by God for whether or not her husband fulfilled his role as a husband. I know that is a relief for my wife! However, God will hold that wife accountable for whether or not she made it easier or harder for her husband to fulfill his role as a husband.

Finally, it is very important that each spouse understands that he or she is held accountable by God to fulfill his or her role even if the other spouse does not obediently fulfill her or his role. God fully equips each Christian spouse to fulfill their role even if their spouse does not fulfill their role. A person cannot blame his or her failure on their spouse.

# GOD'S PURPOSES FOR MARRIAGE – 4 "C'S"

If we are discussing the role of a husband, that obviously implies a marriage. So, before we look specifically at the God given responsibilities of a husband, it would be wise to see first what are God's purposes for marriage. After all, if a man is going to participate in an institution that God created, and he wants to be fruitful and God-pleasing in it, then he should know the purposes for which God created marriage.

Dr Nicolas Ellen has suggested that we can remember God's purposes for marriage by remembering the 4 C's.

## ***The first "C" is companionship.***

God designed marriage for companionship. Genesis 2:18 says:

*"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'"*

Marriage was designed to defeat loneliness. In Genesis Chapter 1, we see at the end of each of the first 5 days of creation, God said it was good. Yet in Genesis 2:18, after God had created the first man Adam, God said (not man said) "It is not good for man to be alone." From there we know that God created woman. A look at Proverbs 2:16-17 and Malachi 2:14 reveals that companionship implies commitment and intimacy. Furthermore, intimacy implies much more than just physical intimacy.

*"To deliver you from the strange woman, From the adulteress who flatters with her words; That leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God;" Proverbs 2:16-17*

*"Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant." Malachi 2:14*

The word companion in Proverbs 2:17: refers to one "in intimate relationship with." The word translated "companion" in Malachi 2:14 refers to one "associated with, or united to." The takeaway from these verses is that commitment without intimacy is not companionship, and intimacy without commitment is not companionship either.

Therefore, the basic responsibility of marriage is to provide companionship. A person vows to provide companionship not to receive it. Marriage is an act of love and a vow to fulfill the commands to be a companion with no strings attached. A person should not enter marriage primarily to get something but to provide something. Furthermore, the commitment of marriage is a covenant of companionship. It is a covenant to meet all desires of companionship on every level (social, intellectual, spiritual, sexual) for the rest of your life.

Let me give you an example. My wife Lisa and I were married after my first year of law school. So unfortunately for

Lisa, our social circle consisted of a lot of stressed-out law students. As you can expect when we were in social settings, the conversation often turned to what had transpired in one of my law school classes. My classmates and I would laugh about something or commiserate about a difficult professor while my poor wife had no context to know why our conversation was funny or interesting. My response to her was a sort of "you had to be there." So, while I was physically present with Lisa on these occasions, I was not providing companionship to her or working to include her as part of the group. In our counseling experience, Lisa and I have seen other examples of how couples develop habits that work against companionship. Such examples include spending the evening in separate rooms, pursuing separate interests (watching TV, playing video games, etc.) or sleeping in separate rooms even when there is no medical reason to do so. Sadly, I've seen many individuals (primarily husbands) who fail to provide other facets of companionship yet complain about a loss of sexual companionship.

### ***The second "C" is co-laboring.***

God designed marriage for co-laboring. We see in Genesis 2:15-18 that God gave man responsibilities in the Garden of Eden. Man was to "cultivate it and keep it." In this passage where God says it was not good for man to be alone, we see that God not only gave Adam a companion but also a suitable helper for his work. Thus, we see that marriage was designed to provide man with a woman to help him in his God-given responsibilities. Marriage was designed so that man and woman could work together as a team in fulfilling God's commandment. Let's look at Genesis 1:26-28. As you read this, pay attention to the pronouns.

*"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." [Emphasis added] Genesis 1:26-28*

This passage reveals that the Triune God worked together. We also see that God blessed "them," the man and the woman, the husband and the wife. However, we also see that God's commands to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth, to subdue the earth and to rule over creation were given to both the man and the woman. They were both held responsible to do the work that God commanded. For that reason, a husband and a wife are both responsible for carrying out the work given to a husband and wife in a family. All responsibility within a family is a joint responsibility with a joint accountability. This does not mean a husband and wife do not have different roles within the family or that they cannot divide up some tasks for efficiency purposes. However, they are each responsible for doing what they can to see that the work gets done. The practical application of this truth is that as a husband you should be willing to ask your

wife for help. You should also be willing to provide your wife with help. There really is not a situation where one can say "Well, that's your job" or "Butt out, this is my job." In fact, any statement from a husband to a wife to that effect of "leave me alone and don't give input unless I ask for it" is a demand the wife cannot and should not submit to because the family business is her joint responsibility, and she will give an account to the Lord for how she carried out her responsibility. Of course, the wife is to offer her input with a gentle and quiet spirit, but she is responsible for sharing her wisdom with her husband. Below, we will discuss how co-laboring plays out in decision making.

### ***The third "C" is cleaving.***

God designed marriage for cleaving. Genesis 2:24 states:

*"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."*

Randy Patten (the former Executive Director of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors) describes the growing unity of a marriage as "leaving, cleaving and weaving."

Husband and wife are called to separate from their mothers and fathers. This is leaving.

Husband and wife are called to come together and build a foundation on their new family not their original family. This is a cleaving.

Husband and wife are to continually move forward in creating "oneness" in marriage. This is a weaving. The husband and wife become "one flesh" at the time of the marriage cov-

enant and then are to work to grow in unity and oneness.

Before I came on staff at my current church, I practiced real estate law for over 27 years. I found it interesting that our American legal system recognizes this “one-flesh” relationship. In real estate law, if a married couple owns real estate, such as their home, it is typically titled as (for example): Anthony A. Anderson and Lisa B. Anderson, husband and wife, as tenants by the entireties. The legal effect of this is that the law recognizes “Anthony and Lisa” as a distinct entity separate from Anthony and Lisa. It’s not that Anthony owns 50% of the house and Lisa owns 50% of the house. Rather, Tony and Lisa own 100% of the house. That is a great picture of oneness in marriage. Two people become one entity.

The result is that the marriage relationship is the most important human relationship. It is intended by God to be a permanent relationship (so long as both the husband and wife are alive). On the contrary, the parent child relationship is temporary at least in the sense of the parents having authority over the children. Therefore, practically, a couple should (1) settle past conflicts with in-laws; (2) not be slavishly dependent on in-laws and (3) always put spouses’ concerns first over parents and children.<sup>1</sup>

## ***The fourth “C” is “Christ and His Church.”***

God designed marriage to reflect the relationship between Christ and His Church. Ephesians 5:31-32 reads as follows:

*“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”*



Almost any time someone studies the Bible to learn about marriage they end up in Ephesians chapter 5. Frankly for many years when I studied Ephesians 5, I glossed over these last 2 verses because I did not comprehend the impact of them: particularly verse 32. The reality is these two verses may very well spell out the most important reason that God instituted marriage.

Moses in Genesis 2:24 spoke of two becoming one flesh (which Paul quotes in Ephesians 5:31), but the Ephesians passage implies that it may be possible (we cannot say for sure) that even then Moses did not fully understand what that meant. In the New Testament, when Paul refers to a “mystery,” he is referring to a truth that was not fully understood until it was revealed and explained by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What Paul is telling us is that God designed marriage to display the relationship between Jesus Christ (our perfect bridegroom) and the Church (the bride of Christ). As Pastor Brad Bigney has said, that means marriage—EACH INDIVIDUAL MARRIAGE, MY MARRIAGE, YOUR MARRIAGE—is to be a billboard, a picture, of Jesus’ relationship to His bride the Church. So as Jesus is to the Church, so a husband **ought to be** to his wife. Conversely, as the church ought to be to Christ, a wife ought to be to her husband.

For some husbands, they may think and act as if so long as they don’t violate any marriage boundary, such as don’t commit adultery or don’t lie to your wife, then they are free to live for self within those boundaries. However, the Biblical truth set forth in Ephesians 5:31-32 reveals a much greater purpose than simply staying within some marriage boundaries. A husband is instructed that when people (and even the unseen world; see Ephesians 3:10) see him in his role as husband, they should see a picture of how Christ relates to the Church (including each individual member)—loving, leading, compassionate, understanding, and protective. When peo-

ple see a wife, they should see a picture of how the Church (universal) should respond in its relationship to Christ—submissive, respectful, and going about His work. This is a high calling. In our marriages, a lost and dying world desperately needs to see what the loving relationship between Jesus and His church looks like.

## **FOR HUSBANDS AND WIVES, JESUS IS HELD UP AS OUR EXAMPLE**

Now that we have looked at God's purposes in ordaining marriage, it is time to look specifically at the Biblical role of the husband. The first passage we will look at is 1 Peter 3:7. 1 Peter 3 sets forth instructions for wives and husbands. However, 1 Peter 3:1 and 3:7 both start with the clause, "in the same way." If you are a good student of the Bible, when you see "in the same way," it should direct you up the page to see what the writer is speaking about. If you started at 1 Peter 3:7, you might think that husbands are to act "in the same way" as wives since wives are the topic of 1 Peter 3:1-6. However, we see from 1 Peter 3:1 that wives are to respond, "in the same way." So that means we must keep looking at previous passages to see what the writer is talking about. When we do, that brings us to 1 Peter 2:18-25:

*"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But*

*if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."*

Verses 19-21 tell us that our purpose is to patiently endure while suffering for doing right; and when we do, this finds favor with God (1 Peter 2:19-21). How is that for a life purpose statement! The good news is Christ also suffered and left us an example to follow. The passage states that when Jesus suffered there were four things He did NOT do, and one thing He DID do.

1. Jesus committed no sin.
2. Jesus did not lie.
3. Jesus did not seek revenge.

4. Jesus did not make threats.
5. But what Jesus did do was entrust Himself to the Father who does judge justly.

We must remember that when Peter wrote this letter there were no chapter divisions or headings. So, it is fascinating to think that Peter points us to Jesus' example on how to patiently endure while suffering for doing right, and then immediately instructs wives and husbands to follow this example in living out their Biblical roles. Peter knew that when 2 married sinners live together in close proximity (even believers) there would be times when a spouse may suffer unjustly while doing right. I think we can agree that when our spouse sins against us it can be tempting to:

- Sin in response; or
- Lie to perhaps avoid a hard conversation; or
- to retaliate; or
- to make threats (if you do that; then I won't do this...).

The Scripture, however, instructs us to do none of that but instead, to trust our heavenly Father who will judge; and when He does, it will be just. So, husband, when you believe you are being treated unjustly while doing right, remember that the Lord will judge your wife perfectly. He will also equip you to fulfill your Biblical role as a husband and hold you accountable for doing so.

Now that we have an understanding of God's purposes for instituting marriage, with our eyes on Jesus as our example, we will look specifically at what the Bible has to say about the role of a husband. Before we do, if you are a wife and you are reading this, I believe it is helpful for you to think about

how you can make it easier for your husband to fulfill his Biblical responsibilities. As stated above, God will not hold you accountable for whether or not your husband fulfills his responsibilities. But God will hold you accountable for whether you made it easier for your husband to fulfill his responsibilities or if you were a stumbling block and made it harder for your husband to fulfill his responsibilities. Similarly, husband, if you sinfully fail to carry out your responsibilities, you will not be excused by God because of anything your wife did or did not do. This is an important truth to remember. There is quite a bit of unbiblical teaching that states a wife or husband “needs” certain things from their spouse to be happy or to fulfill their responsibilities. The truth is God created each of us for the primary purpose of glorifying God and pleasing God (Isaiah 43:7; 2 Corinthians 5:9; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Furthermore, as the passages below make clear, God has given us everything we need to please Him, to glorify Him, and to walk in obedience to Him. We do not need anything from our spouse to fulfill the purpose for which God created us.

*“Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.” 2 Peter 1:3-4*

*"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

## **3 L'S OF THE ROLE OF A HUSBAND**

To make it easier to recall to mind the role of a Biblical husband, we in our counseling ministry tell husbands that the Biblical role of a husband includes the 3 "L's" (and this was not new with us).<sup>2</sup> We will see from the Scriptures that a husband is to be a *learner* of his wife, a *lover* of his wife, and a *leader* of his wife.

### ***The first "L" in the role of a husband is learner.***

1 Peter 3:7 states:

*"You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."*

Husbands must recognize that “understanding” requires learning. If you understand algebra or geometry, it is because you learned the formulas. Therefore, to live with your wife in an understanding way you must be a learner of your wife. Living with your wife in an understanding way is a command. Notice that it is not necessarily a command to understand your wife but to live with her in an “understanding way.” This means you might not “see things” the way she does all the time. However, it does mean that as you seek to love her and lead her (as we will discuss below), you do so in a way that takes into account her patterns of thinking, her spiritual strengths and weaknesses, and what her preferences are.

It is a command that takes time to learn your wife. It also takes time because a wife will change. A wife will not be the same lady she was when you married her or 5, 10, 15, 30 years after the wedding date. Spiritual challenges and growth and life circumstances change a way a person thinks and acts. A husband can't say I studied my wife while we were dating; I don't have to study anymore. A wife is very much like an “App” on your phone. There are constant updates. A common homework assignment we use in our counseling ministry is a handout called “50 Questions to ask your wife” (See Appendix A). In this assignment, the husband is to ask and record the answer to 5-10 of these questions a week. This information will give essential insight to a husband who will use the information to love and lead his wife. To be a learner also requires humility to acknowledge you don't know everything, but you have a desire to learn. Being a learner shows a willingness to put in the effort.

In I Peter 3:7, God says husbands are to live with their wives in an understanding way, “as someone who is weaker.” Although some may balk at the term “weaker” the general truth is wives are physically weaker. But also, a wife may be

more delicate in this sense. Because of the one flesh relationship, a husband's words to his wife can be hurtful, whereas the same words spoken to a wife might be laughed off if said to her by a sister or friend. Similarly, there are things a husband can say to his guy friends that would be painful if said to her. This verse carries a command for a husband to treat his wife as both delicate and valuable. The Scripture makes clear that as a woman a wife is not spiritually inferior (see Galatians 3:28). In fact, 1 Peter 3:7 points out that the believing spouse is a co-heir of the grace of life. However, a wife has voluntarily agreed to submit to her husband (as unto the Lord) when she agreed to marry him. This puts her in a delicate situation. Plus, as we have seen from Ephesians 5:31-32, a husband is to treat his wife like Jesus treats His bride the Church, which is cherished and valuable—so valued that Jesus died for His bride.

I frequently make this comparison. If I owned a Ming Dynasty vase, how would I treat it? I would put it on display, I would treat it as delicate, and I would protect it. I do in fact own several inexpensive "planters" that we use for seasonal flowers in the backyard. Frequently during the year after the flowers have died these planters are knocked over into the dirt and mud, and when we owned dogs... well, let's just say who knows what those dogs did to, or on, those planters. So, husband, if your wife was asked this question: "Does your husband treat you more like a Ming Dynasty vase or a cheap planter?", how would she answer the question? As husbands we should treat our wives as prized and protected. That is, after all, how Jesus treats us.

The command in this verse also comes with a warning for disobedience. A husband's failure to live with his wife in an understanding way or to treat her as valuable and delicate will negatively affect his spiritual life. Peter warns that if a husband's relationship with his wife is not what it should



be then his prayers are hindered. He is denied some or all of the blessings of prayer. The Bible does not say this, but I could image a husband who is NOT acting like Jesus to his wife praying to the Father, and the Father saying: "I created marriage for the purpose of you showing the world how my son Jesus loves and cares for the Church. Until you start doing that, don't expect 'yes' answers to your wish list." I use the term "wish list" because such a man is not pursuing the Kingdom of God and his heart and mind is not aligned with the heart of God.

### ***The second "L" in the role of a husband is lover.***

A Biblical husband must be a lover. (Ephesians 5:25).

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."*

If you have been in church and attended any "marriage" class, then this is probably the one verse addressing husbands that you are familiar with. This verse is a command to love like Christ, but this verse is so rich and deep in meaning that we need to mine as many of the nuggets of truth that are in this verse as possible.

What is Biblical love? That is the first question we must answer. However, in seeking the answer, our culture does not help. Scripture reveals that Biblical love is not *primarily* a feeling, but an action and a choice. Whereas if you polled people "on the street" and asked them "what is love", most would describe it as a feeling or perhaps even a warm fuzzy feeling. As romantic as that may seem, everyone knows that feelings and emotions can ebb and flow based upon how we

selfishly perceive the other person. How is she treating me? What can she do for me? God wants marriages to be built on action not the whims of our feelings.

Biblical love is not only an action; it is sacrificial. John 3:16 says:

*“For God **so loved** the world, that **He gave** [emphasis added] His only be-  
gotten Son, that whoever believes in  
Him shall not perish, but have eter-  
nal life.”*

A husband should realize that God did not sit in heaven and feel all warm and gooey toward us. He gave his only Son. I have heard several good definitions of Biblical love from Biblical counselors over the years, and the definition that I like to use is this:

“Biblical love is choosing to do what is in the best interest of the other person, according to God’s Word, no matter the cost and with no strings attached.”

I think it is important that the definition include “according to God’s Word,” the Bible. Many times, the people we love will want something; however, according to the commands and principles of the Bible, it is not best for them. Anyone who has raised children understands that reality! So as husbands we need to evaluate what is in the best interest of our wives based upon God’s Word.

The verse we started this section with, Ephesians 5:25, says that a husband should love his wife “as Christ has loved the Church.” What does it mean to love like Jesus loved? A better question may be, “What does it look like in real life, to love my wife like Jesus loves the Church?” We know Jesus died

for His Church. Is that it? Is being willing to jump in front of the bus to save my wife the extent of my responsibility? Well, the answer is "no!" Remember husbands in the marriage relationship, we are to exemplify Jesus. We are to be to our wives as Jesus is to His Church. A look at some Scriptures that highlight Jesus' love in relationship to His church should be clarifying.

How does Jesus love His Church? 1 John 4:19 says one of the answers is ***first***.

*"We love, because He first loved us."*

The truth is we did not love Jesus, and then He loved us. Jesus initiated love. He moved toward us. Therefore, the husband is to be the initiator of Biblical love in the home. In fact, I have heard it said that if there is a lack of love in the home and Jesus comes and knocks on the door, it doesn't matter who answers the door, Jesus is going to want to speak to the "man of the house."

Remember, this is not speaking of initiating physical intimacy, but initiating what is in the best interest of your wife. This truth brought great conviction to my life. As of the writing of this resource, I have been married to my wife Lisa for 38 years. We, of course, have had fights, quarrels, and conflicts. I would say that in the great majority of those conflicts Lisa was right. But in those rare times that I was right (or at least thought I was) I would think: "Finally, I am right. I have the moral high ground here. I can wait for her to come to me to admit she is wrong or ask my forgiveness." Then I was taught the truth of how this verse instructs me to love my wife. I was reminded in the marriage I am to exemplify Jesus. The truth is we were all once children of wrath and did not love God, Jesus came to us and loved us (first) through his life, death, and resurrection. If we are believers, we do love Jesus be-

cause He loved us first. He initiated love and made reconciliation with God possible. Therefore, my role in the marriage is to be the initiator of reconciliation with Lisa regardless of who is right or wrong. Reconciliation of the marriage relationship is loving to my wife. And yes, this requires humility. I must either admit I am wrong (and ask forgiveness if I have sinned) or to give up my perceived "rights and privileges" of being right.

How does Jesus love His Church? Ephesians 5:25 says one of the answers is ***most***.

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."*

Jesus gave himself up for me. It is a reality that Jesus loves the Church more than the Church loves Jesus, and that Jesus loves me more than I love Him. Therefore, if I am going to be Jesus to my wife, I should seek to love her more than she loves me. This does not mean you resort to some type of scoreboard where you are thinking: "Well she performed two acts of love today, so I have to perform 3 acts of love." It does mean that as a husband, I should be proactively looking for ways to display Biblical love to my wife. How can I serve her? How can I encourage her? While we may think being Jesus to our wives is a big responsibility, it is also a huge opportunity to be a blessing to our wives and to be used by God in His kingdom work. We show our wives, our kids, our extended family, and friends and a lost and dying world how much Jesus loves us.

How does Jesus love His Church? Ephesians 5:25 also says one of the answers is ***sacrificially***.

We know that Christ died sacrificially for us. However, He

also lived sacrificially for us. Philippians 2:5-8 makes clear that Jesus Christ humbled himself through great sacrifice.

*“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

As a husband you must be willing to live sacrificially to love your wife. It is always good to ask, “what are you unwilling to give up for your wife?” A husband must be willing to sacrifice wants, desires, and hobbies to “prize” his wife or to do what is in her best interest. Sadly, I have heard too many stories of wives who were “football widows” or “hunting widows” or “golf widows” or “gaming widows” because a husband was unwilling to give up his hobbies to love his wife well. I will also address how this plays out in decision making later as we discuss the role of a husband as leader.

How does Jesus love His Church? Romans 8:32 makes clear that one of the answers is ***unmistakably***.

*“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”*

The apostle Paul is making an argument going from the greater to the lesser. Paul is making the point that Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate act of love so why would God withhold any lesser thing that would be good for us. The apostle John encourages us to love with our actions as well.

*"Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." 1 John 3:18*

I am sure most wives like hearing their husbands say, "I love you." I know my wife does. But as a husband you should love your wife in such a way that if you were struck mute and could never say "I love you" to your wife again, she would still never doubt that you loved her. Is that true in your marriage? Do your actions toward your wife show that you love her unmistakably? I challenge you to think, "what could I do today to demonstrate Biblical love to my wife?" Then do it!

How does Jesus love His Church? Romans 5:8 reminds us that Jesus loves us **in spite of our faults.**

*"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8*

This verse reminds us that there was nothing about us that made us loveable to God. Furthermore, Jesus did not wait for us "to clean ourselves up" before He loved us, which is a good thing since there is no way we could clean ourselves. Before we came to faith in Jesus, we were wicked sinners that had no interest in the things of God, and we were described as children of wrath (Ephesians 2:2-4). Nevertheless, Jesus loved us and died for us while we were yet sinners. For any husband, it can be difficult to love your wife when she

sins against you, when she fails you, when she is not seeking to be reconciled to you. In such a case, you as a husband may be tempted to withhold love from your wife because you are focusing on what you are getting or not getting out of the marriage. Let me encourage you to remember how Jesus loved you despite your sins and how He bestowed on you every spiritual blessing. Then out of gratitude for what Jesus has done, chose to "be Christ" to your wife despite her sins and shortcomings.

How does Jesus love His Church? Colossians 3:19 instructs us to love our wives ***without bitterness.***

*"Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them."  
Colossians 3:19*

We have seen how Jesus loved us, and continues to love us, extravagantly despite our sin. Jesus does not grow bitter toward us even though we continue to sin against Him. He loves us. He is always loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, and gentle toward us. That is the fruit of His Spirit. He is always working for our spiritual good. As husbands we are to do likewise. We must seek to do what is in our wives' best interests and not focus on what we are not getting out of the relationship. It brings God great glory and joy, when as a husband, I can practice forgiveness toward my wife as Christ has forgiven me. When I do that, I glorify God (which can be defined as "giving a right opinion of God") and love my wife.

How does Jesus love His Church? Ephesians 5:28-29 makes clear our love for our wives should be a priority.

*"So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He*

*who loves his own wife loves himself;  
for no one ever hated his own flesh,  
but nourishes and cherishes it, just as  
Christ also does the church." Ephesians 5:28-29*

It is important to understand that these verses are NOT a command to love yourself more. Rather, they are an acknowledgement by Paul that we already love ourselves and we should love our wives with the same priority. I don't know about you, but I just naturally tend to look out for myself. If I am hungry, I get something to eat. If I am cold, I put on a sweatshirt. Basically, I make myself a priority. Ephesians 5:28-29 instructs me to love my wife with the same priority. Jesus loves His body—the Church, and it is a priority to Him. A husband and wife have a one flesh relationship that pictures the relationship of Jesus and His bride the Church. We as husbands should love our wives (as we have defined love) otherwise we are hating our own flesh. A husband should be regularly and prayerfully asking, where am I not lovingly serving my wife as a priority? As I have counseled men, I have seen some husbands fail to make loving their wives a priority by:

- Not helping with the instruction and discipline of children when a wife needs help.
- Not proactively solving a problem (see discussion of leadership below) such as a financial issue or taking care of a home or car repair.
- Not participating in the hobbies and interests of his wife.



## **The third “L” in the role of a husband is leader.**

A Biblical husband must be a leader (Ephesians 5:23).

*“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.” Ephesians 5:23*

God calls the husband to be the leader of his wife and family “as Christ is also the head of the church.” How Jesus leads His church is how a husband should lead his wife. Sadly, many men fail to carry out their role as the leader because they abuse this authority, or they passively abdicate their authority.

To understand what Biblical leadership is, I think it is helpful to understand what Biblical leadership is not. A husband does not lead to elevate himself. A husband should not lead with the goal of serving himself or to advance himself. Biblical leadership is not a call to be a dictator.

In Matthew 20, we see this instruction from Jesus:

*“But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be*

*served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." [emphasis added] Matthew 20:25-28*

As husbands our spiritual authority comes from Jesus, and we are to exercise that authority in accordance with the terms that it is bestowed. Accepting the spiritual authority Jesus has delegated is like accepting the terms and conditions of a new App on your phone. You either accept the terms and conditions or you don't get the app. A husband only has spiritual leadership because God has granted that authority, and such authority can only be rightfully exercised on the Lord's terms and conditions. The authority granted a husband is one of servant leadership. Pastor and Biblical counselor Chris Moles in his book, *The Heart of Domestic Abuse: Gospel Solutions for Men Who Use Control and Violence in the Home*, states that rather than using his "power over" his wife (i.e., lording it over her like the Gentiles), a husband should serve his wife by exercising "power under" to elevate her, to seek her best interest, to serve her like Jesus serves the Church. Ask yourself, "am I a servant leader?" As someone once said: "The test of your servanthood is how you respond when you are treated like one." A man may say he is a servant of his wife, but what if he begins to think:

- "I am being taken for granted."
- "My interest or desires are being ignored;" or
- "I am giving more than I am getting."

If he begins to think that way, then he will be tempted to think more like some modern "volunteer" than a servant. Some volunteers serve so long as they are recognized for their service or until something better comes along. A servant remains in place until his master's work is done. Now

please don't get me wrong. Being a servant leader can be hard. But for me, remembering I am serving my Lord while serving my wife helps me persevere. These words from Jesus help me remember my priorities:

*“Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’? But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink’? He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’” Luke 17:7-10*

I am an unworthy slave, who by the grace of God, has been saved by faith and granted the awesome privilege of participating in the Lord's work. While in this life on earth, and particularly while I am married, the Lord has called me to serve my wife and to give a picture of how Jesus loves His church. When the Lord calls me home (or returns) I may “eat and drink.” In the meantime, I want to be about my Master's work.

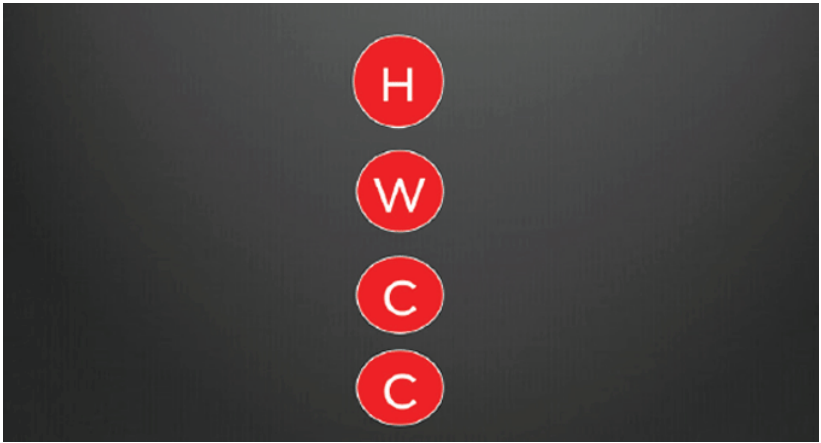
As a leader, a husband doesn't lead without input. Proverbs 18:13 warns that it is folly and shame to make decisions (“give an answer”) without information. A husband must remember that his wife was created to be his co-laborer. Part of the

wife's God given role is to share wisdom with her husband. Furthermore, there may be areas where the wife has "subject matter expertise." In all cases, the husband would be a fool not to get input from his wife before making a decision.

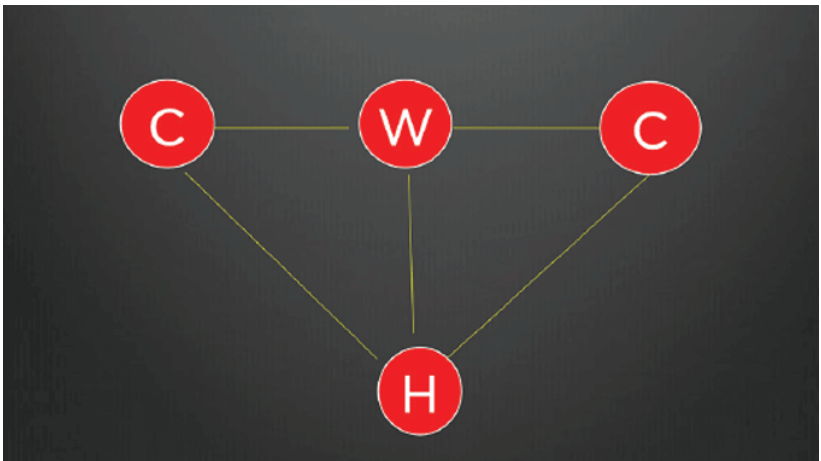
When I share this truth with men, I frequently share a story from my college days. I went to a small college. After the last day of our senior year, the seniors remained on campus for a week until our graduation ceremony the following weekend. Some of these men were my fraternity brothers and they were also part of the ROTC program on campus. As I think back on that time, it blows my mind that some of those 21-year-old men graduated from college and a few hours later were commissioned as 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenants in the United States Army, and then a few days later given rank and authority over men. Gratefully, these young lieutenants were in platoons with older, wiser, and experienced sergeants. Yes, they had rank and authority over the sergeants, but they would have been fools not to consult with the sergeants in making decisions and giving orders. In the same way, a husband would be foolish to not take advantage of his wife's wisdom and perspective before making a decision.

This leads me to one more fallacy I want to address. A man may think that if he implements his wife's recommendation when he makes a decision, then it was his wife who made the decision, and if he does that frequently, then it is his wife who is leading. That is not true. It is the husband who decided to implement the wife's recommendation. This is what Chief Executive Officers of companies do all the time. They solicit input from their Chief Operating Officers, Chief Financial Officers, and Sr. Vice Presidents, but ultimately the decision is theirs, and they are held accountable for those decisions. As husbands we should seek the input of our wives and implement the decision we think is best, and the Lord will hold us accountable for that decision not our wives.

I think two visuals can help us understand Biblical leadership. The first image depicts what it looks like when we play the traditional "follow the leader." Each member of the family "W" (wife) and "C" (child) is to follow behind "H" (husband) wherever he wants to go and do whatever he wants to do. The problem with this is the husband is focused on his agenda and is blind to whether his wife and children are lagging behind or wandering off the trail.



Rather, Biblical leadership is better depicted by the inverted triangle model of leadership.<sup>3</sup>



As we stress in counseling, each believer's primary goal in life is to please and glorify God by becoming more like Jesus in growing measure (Isaiah 43:7; 2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Cor. 10:31; Romans 8:28-29). Therefore, the husband, as the spiritual leader of his family, should see each of his family members as being on the "front line" of life, and he is behind calling up all resources he can to help them grow and move forward toward Christlikeness. This is much like how an officer in a battle would be deploying resources to the troops on the front line to give them everything they need to be successful in their mission. In the case of the family, a husband (and dad) should seek to provide what is needed to provide for the health and safety of his family and for their spiritual growth in Christlikeness.

Here are some very practical ways that a husband can be a good leader of his wife and family.

***A husband should focus on needs of the family.*** (Ephesians 5:25; Philippians 2:20-21; Ephesians 6:4).

A husband's primary goal should be to please God as a leader. God wants a husband to love God and love others. A husband loves his wife and family when he seeks to provide them what they need to be more pleasing to God. Therefore, if a wife struggles with anxiety, her husband should seek to show her from the Scriptures that God is sovereign and trustworthy. Perhaps this husband has a daughter who is unwilling to share with her siblings. In that case, he should seek to teach his daughter from the scriptures the importance of sharing and kindness. There may be physical needs a wife or child has, and the husband should take the lead in addressing those need

***A good leader will also be goal oriented.***

Like the paragraph above, a husband will assess the state of some aspect of his family ("present reality") and define how that aspect of the family can grow or change for the better ("preferred future"). However, he does not stop there. With

input from his wife, he lays out a plan to achieve the goal of the preferred future. Some of the goals may be tangible such as reducing debt. Others can be spiritual goals. I am aware of several families who have the goal of fostering love and closeness between siblings. So, they implement steps that encourage that. For example, only one sibling may play a sport or participate in an activity at a time so that the other siblings can be present to cheer on their sibling. They may also establish that once a day at school the siblings will meet up with each other just encourage each other and to let the other(s) know "I got your back if you need anything."

***A good leader will set example of self-control.*** The Apostle Paul lived such a life that he could tell the Philippians to model his behavior (Philippians 4:9). As a husband seeks to encourage his wife and children to grow in Christlikeness, he must model godly behavior. I am not saying he should be perfect, but his family should be able to see spiritual growth. Related to that, a husband should maintain a lifestyle of integrity and discipline. He should avoid excessive drink, food (gluttony), spending, and laziness that distracts from his leadership.

***A good leader will solve problems.*** (Ephesians 4:29) Life happens and problems arise. A good leader must do more than talking about the problem. He must lay out solutions and implement them. This is a big challenge for many men that hope a problem will go away or just take care of itself (or my wife will handle it) so that they don't have to make tough decisions or have tough conversations.

***A good leader will be a teacher of God's Word.*** (Deuteronomy 32:46; 1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12) A Biblical husband will teach the truth of God's Word. When issues arise or decisions need to be made, a good husband will ask "what does the Bible say about this?" Such an approach shows humility. It also shows a family that the answers to

life are found in the Scriptures and not in the wisdom of man. You may read this and think "I am not as knowledgeable about the Bible as my wife." Don't shrink back. Ask your wife to help you search the Scriptures, but also let such a reality challenge you to study the Bible. Find classes at your church that teach theology or that teach the Scriptures with an emphasis on applying the Scriptures. Perhaps even do a home study with your wife.

A good leader will be a joy to live with. (Proverbs 5:18). Yes, at times a husband and dad has to have hard conversations and bring discipline and consequences to a child. However, you can be a fun husband and dad. I encourage you to get input from wife and ask her: "Am I fun to live with?" Perhaps in the past your time has been consumed with work or your hobbies and you interact with your wife and children only when discipline has been needed or something has gone wrong. I encourage you to find time to enjoy your family. This can be done with regular date nights with your wife as well as simple things such as family game night, picnics, or simply taking your son or daughter with you on errands.

### ***A good leader will set the pace spiritually.***

If you want your wife to love the Lord, set the pace. Ask yourself: "Are you the driving force in getting the family to church?" Does your wife see you studying the Word of God? I must admit that early in our marriage before we had kids it was easy to sleep in on Sunday mornings. My wife and I both "knew" we should go to church, but we would wake up and feel the other one out as to whether they wanted to go to church. If one of us showed any inclination to stay home, the other eagerly endorsed the plan. I ultimately realized that was not good leadership. So, I decided we needed to make a commitment that if we were in town and healthy, we were going to church on Sunday. That changed our perspective. We knew Sunday was for church, and that impacted how we planned our weekends.



# ***BIBLICAL DECISION MAKING***

I want to close this booklet with a discussion on Biblical decision making in the home and how a husband operates as a learner, lover, and leader in the process. Let's assume a husband must make a decision that impacts his family. We know there are countless decisions that must be made when leading a family such as school choice, insurance, home purchase, possible relocation, etc. However, for this discussion we will just assume a decision has to be made and there are four (4) possible choices or options. Option A, Option B, Option C, and Option D represented below.

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | B | C | D |
|---|---|---|---|

The first step a husband should take is to get input from his wife, who is his helpmate and co-laborer. What does she think the pros and cons are of each decision? Of course, if either of you thinks it is wise to get input from a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, then such person should be consulted as well.

After this input, let's assume that the husband determines that pursuit of one of the options would be sinful. In that case, the husband should eliminate that option. For our discussion, the sinful option was "C." So, we are left with 3 options on the table.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| A | B | D |
|---|---|---|

At this point, after prayer and based upon Biblical principles, the husband should seek to pick the option that is wisest for his family. The husband should also solicit and accept any

additional input his wife has. After this occurs, let's assume the husband believes that Option A is not the wisest choice. In that case, he should eliminate Option A. Should he eliminate Option A even if that is his wife's preference? Answer: YES. Of course, "why" Option A was his wife's choice should have been considered, but if the husband believes that Option A would not be as wise of a choice for his family, then he should eliminate Option A. So, we are left with 2 options on the Table.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| B | D |
|---|---|

Until a decision is made and implemented, there is always opportunity to gather new data. But let's assume at this point the husband thinks Option B is the wisest and best choice for the family. Then he should communicate to his wife that he is choosing Option B and explain why he believes it to be the wisest choice.

But let's assume that Option B and Option D are both valid choices and the husband cannot say one is wiser than the other. However, the husband prefers Option B, and the wife prefers Option D. In that case the husband should always (not 50% of time) choose Option D in order to love his wife sacrificially. He should sacrifice his preference to love his wife like Christ loved the church. And we husbands should act with integrity in these matters and not try to claim Option B (in this example) is "wiser" just so we can justify picking our preference.

As you have read this booklet, you have probably thought that the role of a Biblical husband carries a lot of responsibility. You're right it does—no doubt. However, let what encourages me, encourage you. God's desire is to show how much He loves His children. My guess is an infinite God could have shown His love in an infinite number of ways. But what God did was institute marriage, and then gave the husband the privilege of being a picture of Jesus in the way Jesus loves His bride, the Church. What an awesome opportunity. For sure, it is a responsibility that no man can pull off in his own strength. But God's commands always include His enablement. With the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit in us, and the truth of the Bible, we have all we need to be that picture of Christ to our wives, to our families, and to a lost and dying world that desperately needs to see the love of Jesus.

**Blessings to you  
as you seek to  
put Christ on display!**

## Endnotes

1. I recommend the booklet *In-Laws: Married with Parents*, by Dr. Wayne Mack to better understand how a married couple can honor the Lord and their parents.
2. I first heard the "3 L's" at the Counseling and Discipleship Conference at Faith Church in Lafayette, In.
3. I likewise first saw this diagram at the Counseling and Discipleship Conference at Faith Church in Lafayette, In.



## ***Appendix A***

# ***50 Questions to Ask Your Wife***

1. What are your 5 favorite foods, with the most favorite first?
2. What are your 5 favorite kinds of meals, with the most favorite first?
3. What are your 5 favorite desserts, with the most favorite first?
4. What are your 5 favorite restaurants, with the most favorite first?
5. What is your favorite color?
6. What are your 5 favorite hobbies, with the most favorite first?
7. What are your 5 favorite recreations, with the most favorite first?
8. What are your 5 favorite sources of reading, with the most favorite first?
9. What gifts do you like?
10. What is your favorite books(s) of the Bible?  
Why?
11. What is your favorite verse(s) of the Bible?  
Why?
12. What is your favorite song?

13. What makes you the most fulfilled or happiest as a woman?
14. What makes you the most fulfilled or happiest as a wife?
15. What makes you the most fulfilled or happiest as a mother?
16. What makes you saddest as a woman?
17. What makes you saddest as a wife?
18. What makes you saddest as a mother?
19. What do you fear the most?
20. What other fears do you have?
21. What do you look forward to the most?
22. How much sleep do you need?
23. What do you consider to be your skills?
24. What do you believe to be your spiritual gifts?
25. What are your weaknesses?
26. What things (personal, home, car, etc.) need repairing?
27. To ask wife: With what chores and responsibilities do you like my help?
28. What caresses do you enjoy the most?
29. What caresses do you enjoy the least?

30. What action of mine provides you the greatest sexual pleasure?
31. What other things stimulate you sexually?
32. At what times do you need assurance of my love the most?
33. How can that love be shown?
34. What can I do that will make it easier to discuss and work on areas or problems that are uncomfortable to you?
35. What concerns do you have that I do not seem interested in?
36. What things do I do that irritate you?
37. What desires do you have that we haven't discussed?
38. What do you enjoy doing with me, with the most enjoyable first?
39. What things can I do that show my appreciation of you?
40. What varying desires (spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, social, worth, appreciations, recreational, security, etc.) would you like me to provide?
41. In what ways would you like me to protect you (physically, spiritually, socially, emotionally)?
42. In what ways would you like me to sacrifice for you?



43. What things do you see by my actions that I place first in my life?
44. What implied or unspoken desires and wishes of yours would you like for me to fulfill?
45. What concerns and interests of yours would you like me to support?
46. How much time would be good for us to spend together each day?
47. In helping family members to use their skills and develop their abilities, what motivating factors would be helpful for me to use?
48. What can I do that provides the greatest comfort and encouragement for you when you are hurt, fearful, anxious or worried?
49. What personal habits do I have that you would like changed?
50. What ways demonstrate to you that you are a very important person who is as important or more important than I am?





