

Sermon: “On Being Family” - The Wife’s Role

Texts: Ephesians 5:21-33; I Peter 3:1-7 ESV

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Ephesians 5:21-33 ESV 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.[a] 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Footnotes: [a] Ephesians 5:27 Or holy and blameless

Introduction: It’s been said: “Marriage which makes two people one, is a lifelong struggle to determine which is the ‘one.’” It has been said if you want your wife to always listen to what you say, talk in your sleep’.

I noticed this on Facebook the other day: “My wife yelled at me saying ‘You weren’t even listening just now, were you?!’ I thought, ‘Man what a weird way to start a conversation.’”

When you live for nearly 49 years with a good-looking, brilliant, sophisticated, perfectionist male (and I could go on), sometimes things can become difficult. But thank God, Teresa is a good wife and my children still respect me.

Not only is it hard to find a “good” husband; it is hard to find a good wife.

Proverbs 31:10 ESV 10 An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.

A wife of noble character as it reads in the NIV will be found fulfilling God's role for her. We understand from Scripture that a wife must:

I. Submit to Her Husband

In fact in **Ephesians 5:24**, we are told "wives should submit in everything to their husbands." We are also told clearly by the Apostle Paul husbands and wives are to be "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (**5:21**)."

The real question is "Who goes first?" The husband says "Submit to me." The wife says, "When you love me like Christ loves the church, then I'll submit to you." Who should submit first? The real answer is the one who is more mature in their walk with Christ should be the first to submit because it is what God wants!

To clear up any misunderstanding, Submission is NOT: being a doormat. Let's look at the text in I Peter 3. **I Peter 3:1-7 ESV** ¹ Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ² when they see your respectful and pure conduct. ³ Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. ⁷ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you[a] of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Footnotes: [a] **I Peter 3:7** Some manuscripts since you are joint heirs

In the I Peter 3 text, Sarah is given as an example of submissiveness, but no one should confuse her with being a weak, helpless woman. She was a strong, capable woman who persuaded Abraham to do things differently on many occasions.

Genesis 21 tells such a story. Sarah got irritated because Ishmael, the son of her servant, began to mock her son, Isaac. In **Genesis 21:10 ESV** Sarah says to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac."

Does that sound like the same person who called Abraham, “Master”? Well, it is! Abraham did not dismiss her or her thoughts on the subject. In fact, God tells Abraham, “Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” (cf. Genesis 21:12,13).

A wise husband will listen to and weigh his wife’s counsel, especially if she is more gifted in a particular area (e.g. discernment). It’s been said that a man who tries to lay down the law will spend the rest of his life accepting his wife’s amendments.

Submitting to your husband does not mean you don’t think about and weigh his decisions.

Illus. There was a football game, and it was in the last quarter. The home team is down 3 points and have the ball on their own 2-yard line. The 1st string quarterback got hurt on the last play from scrimmage. The 2nd string quarterback was already hurt and so the 3rd string quarterback is brought over to the coach. The coach says, “Listen very carefully to me. This is what I want you to do. I want you to run the fullback off tackle, then a draw play, then I want you to quick kick the ball. So the quarterback goes in. The first play the fullback runs up to the 20-yard line. The second play, the fullback nearly breaks it all the way and ends up on the opponents 2 yard line almost scoring. The 3rd play you guessed it, the quarterback goes back and quick kicks the ball. The coach is furious and he brings the young man over and says “What in the world were you thinking?” The quarterback said, “I thought — we sure do have a dumb coach.”

No one should blindly follow anyone. That goes for wives when husbands suggest doing something which is wrong, or just plain stupid.

Submission is a voluntary act.

Think about Jesus and how He submitted to God the Father. Of His own free will He sacrificed Himself for us. There was no inequality there between Him and the Father. He chose to limit himself for the best interest of all mankind. Aren’t you glad He did?

In fact you can’t make people submit to you – I mean really love you if they don’t want to. Submission (allegiance, if you will) has to be given freely. Wives are not slaves to anyone.

But they are commanded by God to be submissive.

Obviously it is much easier for a wife to submit to a Christ-like husband, but in I Peter 3 it says a wife should be submissive even if her husband is an unbeliever. You do not have to be the leader in any relationship to affect change. Sometimes the best ideas and actions come from those not in leadership.

Women are **not** to be submissive to men in general terms. God only says wives need to be in submission to their husband. If a woman is unmarried then God or Christ becomes her immediate authority. But whether a woman is married or not, she must:

II. Obey God

There are certain things that have been ordered by God. All of us are to acknowledge and respect God's delegated line of authority. If I rebel against the law of the land, I am in open rebellion against God. If the wife rebels against her husband, she is rebelling against not just her husband, but God. The only exception is when a husband's wishes or man's law violates God's law.

There is nothing wrong if we want to express our disagreement. We do live in a democracy. The family is structured like that. The husband is not God; the family is not a theocracy, nor is the husband, king because the family again is not a monarchy. But, the husband is to be God's representative in the family as God's appointed leader.

Wives should obey their husbands. We are given examples of wives both obeying and disobeying their husbands in Scripture.

In our relationship with God, obedience demonstrates love. Wives who obey their husbands are showing love. If you remember the story of Abraham and Sarah, it must have been difficult to pull up stakes after 65 years in the same place and start over on the Word of God.

Hebrews 11:8-10 ESV ⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Sarah could have refused to go or undermined Abraham's decision, but she obeyed. And because she obeyed her husband, we have salvation today.

One act of obedience can change the course of history. Jesus' one act of obedience in the cross changed the face of humanity forever.

How many people think they know who Lot was in the O.T.? Do you remember the story of Lot's wife and what happened to her?

Illus. Lot's wife. (**Genesis 19:26 ESV** – 26 “But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.” She disobeyed the angel's warnings. If God says to do or not do something, whether we understand it or not, we would be wise to obey.

How many people know who Ananias and Sapphira were in the N.T.?

Illus. Ananias and Sapphira. If your husband is not following God, then don't follow your husband. Sapphira followed her husband's lead and paid with her life.

According to God's Word a wife must:

III. Respect Her Husband

33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Respect must be earned and comes as a natural response to a loving husband. The Greek word is φοβέομαι – (the noun form is phobia in English). This is not an irrational fear, unease, or even terror here, but it truly is respect and trust in a faithful and loving spouse.

Teresa once said, “If a wife cannot respect her husband, she probably does not respect herself either.”

Here is what H. Norman Wright has said: “Although both men and women need respect, men seem to need it more than women. When you respect people, you value them. You have a high regard for them and you honor them.”

Romans 12:10 in the TLB translation says: “Love each other with brotherly affection and take delight in honoring each other.”

Belittling, correcting and giving too much unsolicited assistance diminishes respect.

The Apostle Paul wrote: [Ephesians 5:33 Amplified Bible](#) 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].

If this advice were followed by all husbands and wives, there would be little need for marriage counseling.

Wives, if you want a better husband, submit yourself to him, obey him, respect him. Husbands you have the hardest task of all. You must, i.e., it is your duty to God to love your wives the way Christ loves His Church.

If husbands and wives both - obey God in these areas, the world will come for a hearing of God's Word. God's way is always the best.

Maybe the reason Rodney Dangerfield got no respect, is because he didn't deserve it. Men, we ought to try and earn our wife's respect. Love them the way Jesus does. It will make all the difference in both your lives.

Conclusion: God knew what He was doing when He designed marriage. When we follow His plan, we will succeed. When we disobey, we will suffer the consequences. If our marriages are to reflect Christ's love for the Church, then we ought to use the right marriage manual. No matter what the current trends may be, God's truth found in His Word will show us how to be successful in all our relationships.

[Titus 2:1-5 ESV](#) ¹ But as for you, teach what accords with sound[a] doctrine. ² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Footnotes: [a] Titus 2:1 Or healthy; also verses 2, 8

May we always be in relationships that honor God and are true to His never-changing word.