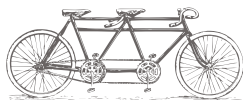


FROM THIS DAY
FORWARD

MARRIAGE SUNDAY
with Dr. Danny Akin

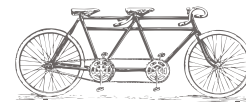
TEACHER GUIDE



FROM THIS DAY
FORWARD

MARRIAGE SUNDAY

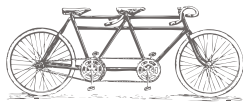
SUNDAY, MARCH 4
with Dr. Danny Akin



SUNDAY SCHOOL

FOUNDATION
for MARRIAGE

SUNDAY, MARCH 4



*“Always be humble and gentle.
Be patient with each other,
making allowance for each other’s
faults because of your love.”*

EPHESIANS 4:2

The Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy without intervention would have fallen. Quite significantly, the word “pisa” means “marshy land,” which gives some clue to why the tower began to lean even before it was completed. Its foundation for the 185-foot tower is only 10 feet deep. Construction began in 1173 as the third and final structure of the cities cathedral complex. Three of its eight stories had been completed when the uneven settling of the building’s foundation in the soft ground became noticeable. At that time, war broke out between the Italian city-states, and the construction was halted for almost a century. This pause allowed the tower’s foundation to settle and likely prevent an early collapse. Giovanni di Simone, the engineer in charge when the construction resumed, sought to compensate for the lean by making the new stories slightly taller on the short side, but the extra masonry caused the structure to sink still further. The project was plagued with interruptions as engineers sought solutions to the leaning problem, but the tower was ultimately topped out in the 14th century. Twin spiral staircases lined the towers interior with 294 steps leading from the ground to the bell chamber; one staircase had two additional steps to compensate for the towers lean. The tower continued to move about one-twentieth of an inch a year. In 1990 the big tower was leaning over 17 feet, and it was predicted to fall by 2007. Engineers closed the tower and began to come up

with a plan to strengthen the foundation. Injections of cement and bracings to reinforce the tower were put into place and the work was completed in May 2001. All of the adjustments made to the tower could not stop or compensate for the leaning. It wasn't until the foundation was taken care of that it stopped its downward fall.

How many of us would say that it was obvious that this foundation needed to be fixed rather than making adjustments to the stairwell and the height of the floors? But, when it comes to our lives we often try to make adjustments to fix issues or problems and never realize that we have a foundation problem. Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain." This verse teaches us the truth that every endeavor in life must be based on a relationship with Christ. This is especially true when it comes to our marriages. If they are to be strong, if they are to glorify God, if they are to be a blessing to us and others, then they must be built on the bedrock of a strong and serious relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

MATTHEW 6:33

Q

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BELIEVING THE BIBLE IS TRUE AND BELIEVING IT IS SUFFICIENT?

YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS TRUE,
BUT DO YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS
SUFFICIENT FOR YOUR MARRIAGE?

To believe that the Bible is sufficient is to believe that not only is it completely true, but that it is enough to shape our thoughts, perspectives, and opinions on every important issue of life. This Matthew 6:33 scripture speaks to the fact that all scripture speaks into our marriage because our walk with Christ as a believer is the foundation for our life and our marriage. If we as husbands and wives are seeking to follow Christ, then everything else falls into place. We live in a broken world and often times our vision gets clouded with the world's view of marriage. We often think about what we can get out of our marriages when we should be thinking about what we could give to our marriages. Instead, we bring into our marriage the world's shortsighted, halfhearted, self-centered vision of what marriage expectations are. When those expectations are not met, then the marriage begins to falter. The marriage has been built on the wrong foundation. We attempt to add a little church and a little Jesus into our marriages rather than making the Lord the center of our homes.

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

MATTHEW 7:24-27

This passage does teach us to build our marriages on the foundation of God's Word, but that is not the only lesson that this passage teaches. This passage also exposes when we have built our marriages on something other than God's truths. Ephesians 4:14–15 says, "So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." All of us face storms and difficult times in our marriage...that's life. The question is... when those storms come, how has your marriage handled those difficult days? Has your marriage grown stronger through each of those storms or has your relationship begun to falter? If your marriage has taken a step backwards during those times, then it's time to ask yourself...what is the foundation of your marriage?

REPAIRING THE FOUNDATION

Is there any truth to the statement: "For any marriage to have a 'makeover' there must be a spiritual makeover first?"

Next week we will look at Ephesians 5:21–33, which will speak to the biblical roles in marriage for both husbands and wives. For the husband, his role is to love, serve, and lead. The biblical role for the wife is to help, respect, and submit. Many husbands and wives are waiting for their spouse to make changes before they are willing to do anything different themselves. Before these roles of the husband and the wife can be filled, their individual walks with the Lord should be in a good place.



IN WHAT WAYS DO WE TEND TO JUDGE OTHERS BY THEIR ACTIONS AND OURSELVES BY OUR INTENTIONS?

TWO KEYS

Here is a great illustration from *Visionary Marriage* by Rob and Amy Rienow:

Have you ever seen one of those political thriller movies where soldiers are deep in a secret bunker waiting for the orders to launch the missile? Each one has his hand on a key. For the missile to launch, both people must turn their keys. Many husbands and wives are waiting for their spouse to make changes before they are willing to do anything different themselves. You must turn your key first, and then I will turn mine! So, the wife says, "As soon as I see you starting to love, serve, and lead, then I will start helping, respecting, and submitting." The man replies, "Well, as soon as I get some respect around here, then I will love you more. How can I love someone who treats me the way you do?" Then around and around we go.

Struggling marriages are often locked in "blame mode." As the woman considers her marriage and family her thoughts go something like this, "If my husband would just show me more affection, be less harsh with the kids, realize that his work schedule is killing the family, and lead the family devotions then everything around here would change." His thoughts move in the same directions, "If my wife would stop being so anxious about everything, have a positive attitude, stop treating me like a child, and quit

being reckless with our money then everything around here would change. There are two reasons why “blame mode” is easy to get into and hard to leave. First, just with our first parents Adam and Eve, our sinful nature always wants to blame others for the problems and suffering in our life. Second, the list of concerns that you have about your spouse is probably totally legitimate. If your spouse did make these changes your family would change dramatically.

But here is the problem. When both of you are in blame mode, your marriage won't change. All of your energy is focused on your spouse's problems and shortcomings. How is it working for you? Is your spouse changing? Probably not. Blame mode is not effective for bringing about change in your spouse. It is like one soldier, who is not turning his missile key, sitting there obsessing about why the other guy is not turning his!

So, who should go first? Should the husband start loving, serving, and leading? Or should the wife start helping, respecting, and submitting? Eggerichs has a great answer to this. He suggests that the more mature person should go first. Ponder that for a moment and you will quickly see his point.

Q

THINK OF A TIME YOU WERE IN “BLAME MODE.” HOW DID THAT WORK OUT?

WHAT WOULD BE A BETTER WAY OF ADDRESSING ISSUES IN A MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP INSTEAD OF BLAMING YOUR SPOUSE?

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

Scriptures that speak to our Marriages

This is why all scripture is able to speak into marriages. Here are some examples of how Scripture leads us to a fulfilling marriage:

1. LOVE:

When we speak of love, we are not talking about the kind of love portrayed in Hollywood. Movies and television depict love as nothing more than a sexual desire. While the sexual relationship within the context of marriage is very important (1 Corinthians 7:1-5), we are talking of a commitment that flows from a deeper, more spiritual kind of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Here is a closer look at love's character:

Patient - This word means, “patient endurance even when provoked, long tempered.” Love does not retaliate!

Kind - This word refers to active goodness. It is never hateful or mean. Love is kind in words and actions.

Does Not Envy - True love is not jealous. Instead of being jealous when others prosper or excel, love is pleased when they do well.

Does Not Boast - This phrase literally means does not make a parade. Love does not brag! It does not draw attention to itself or to what it is doing.

Is Not Arrogant - Love is not arrogant or proud. It does not demand to be number one.

Is Not Rude - Love is never rude, but it always treats others with compassion, consideration, and respect!

Does Not Insist on its Own Way - True love is never selfish and self-centered, but it is actively interested in what will profit others. It never looks at itself first but always considers others ahead of itself.

Is Not Irritable - True love keeps no record of evils done to it, but it willingly endures all slights and injuries.

Is Not Resentful - Two thoughts are in mind here...first, genuine love does not attribute evil motives to people. Second, genuine love does not keep a record of evils done to it. It does not hold a grudge.

Does Not Rejoice at Wrongdoing - Love does not rejoice in sin.

Rejoices with the Truth - It rejoices when truth is proclaimed and when truth wins the victory. Love is glad for the truth, even when the truth hurts.

This kind of love is meant to be mutual. The husband is commanded to love his wife with every fiber of his being (Eph. 5:25,28,31). The wife is commanded to love her husband (Titus 2:4). This is LOVE built on a solid foundation.



WHAT DO YOU THINK COMES FIRST,
FEELINGS OF LOVE OR THE ACTIONS
OF LOVE?

2. LOYALTY

Ephesians 5:31 speaks of the truth of “leaving and cleaving.” This is a relationship that is so strong that it changes all other relationships. It is the ideal of two things being bonded together in such a way that they cannot be torn apart. It is a bond so strong and deep that you cannot tell where one begins and the other ends.

This loyalty is defined in 1 Cor. 13:7:

Bears all things – It is loyal even when things are tough. It does not walk out in the day of trouble. It means not only not walking out, but not “checking out as well.”

Believes all things - Loyalty believes in one’s mate. That can mean so much. At times it means trusting in their heart more than their words. It can mean trusting in the Lord to work in their life. Seeing above the here and now and helping them to be a better person, never giving up on them.

Hopes all things - Loyalty never looks for the worst in your mate. Encouragement goes so much farther than discouragement. There is an attitude of love that shows hope in the hardest times of a relationship.

Endures all things - Loyalty sticks it out. It does not abandon the fort.

3. ATTITUDE & PERSPECTIVE

Your attitude is one of your most valuable assets! The Stanford Research Institute reports that only 12.5% of success in life is determined by knowledge, the other 87.5% is determined by attitude. More than skill, knowledge, or aptitude, our attitude dictates

our success in life. Chuck Swindoll said, “I believe the single most difficult decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude. The attitude I choose keeps me going or cripples my progress. When my attitudes are right, there is no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme.”

Galatians 5:22–23 teaches us, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the result of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the life of a Christian. The Bible makes it clear that everyone receives the Holy Spirit the moment he or she believes in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9, 1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 1:13-14). One of the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit is to come into the Christian’s life and to change that life. It is the Holy Spirit’s job to conform us to the image of Christ, making us more like him. However, the Lord allows us to choose how much we allow the Holy Spirit to control our life (John 15). Allowing the Holy Spirit to control our life is more than an attitude or a perspective; it becomes who we are. It is an act of surrender, a willingness to give up control. When we allow the Holy Spirit to direct our life, we receive fruit from that willingness to surrender to the Lord’s leadership. That fruit is evident in how we treat others and especially how we relate to our family. Who we are at home generally speaks to who we really are.

You have probably heard time and time again that marriage takes work. That is why at Immanuel we have named our marriage ministry Built 4:2. Marriage takes effort. If a marriage is unattended by both husband and wife, then there is a natural tendency for that relationship to decline. We as couples need to nourish and build our marriages.

Our Built 4:2 ministry can give us tools to communicate, understand the differences between a man and a woman, and handle conflict. Before any of those skills can be developed there must first be a foundation of both the husband and wife seeking to be a faithful follower of Christ.

The problem is that the Christian life is a battle of the sinful flesh against a new nature given by Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). As fallen human beings, we are still trapped in a body that desires sinful things (Romans 7:14–25). A godly attitude doesn’t come because you decide to smile harder. A godly attitude comes because you decide to follow God. You get to have bad days, but, as Christians, we get to have the hope of a better one. As Christians, we are called to view our lives through the lens of faith, and in return, we are meant to show the world an attitude that boasts of Jesus. We’re not called to be perfect beams of sunshine all the time. Life is tough, and our response to that is what draws us closer to Christ. Through prayer and spending time with him, we can change our attitudes and our marriages.

Teachers pass out Built 4:2 scriptures for different topics in marriage.

Prepare for next week by reading Ephesians 5:22-33.

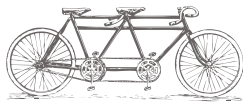


WHAT WOULD BE A GOOD “JOB DESCRIPTION” FOR A HUSBAND AND FOR A WIFE?

SUNDAY SCHOOL

MARRIAGE
ROLES

SUNDAY, MARCH 11



“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

EPHESIANS 5:22-33

Introduction

I. Husband’s Roles

1. Love 2. Serve 3. Lead

II. Wives’ Roles

1. Help 2. Respect 3. Submit

INTRODUCTION

Last week we spent time talking about the foundation of marriage. Our individual walk with the Lord and reliance on the Holy Spirit in our life is truly the foundation for our marriages. Marriage takes effort; we are constantly working on building our marriages. If a relationship with the Lord is our foundation, then His Word is the blueprint that we use to build our marriages.

Ephesians 5:22–33 gives us a clear plan for roles as husbands and wives. Without a blueprint, our marriages lack direction and purpose for our life and the life of generations to come. As you journey through marriage together, you want to grow in your love for each other to experience life fully, and to truly become one.

*“It is not good that the man should be alone,
I will make him a helper fit for him.”*

GENESIS 2:18

You need each other. God gave each of you a mate to go through life together. It cannot be said enough... marriage is not about us; it's about the Lord. In short, our role as husbands and wives is to help each other grow closer to the Lord. The closer we are to the Lord, the stronger our marriages are. Do you see the beauty there? In order for our marriages to be strong, our walk with the Lord should be in a good place. Our job as husbands and wives is to encourage each other to stay strong in the Lord. What a cycle. If both the husbands and wives focus on their spouse and encourage them in times of weakness, they have true companionship...someone you can always count on through the good and hard times even when hard times are brought on by poor decisions or attitudes.

There is always someone that you can depend on. Marriage is not about what you deserve or want from a marriage, it is about how you can come alongside your husband or wife and help them become stronger in the Lord. The paradox of that is...the more you give to your marriage, the more you receive because both of you are pouring into each other.

GOD'S CALL TO HUSBANDS

Love, Serve, Lead

1. LOVE

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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.”

EPHESIANS 5:25-27

Men, have you ever been part of a conversation where you just wish they would get to the point? Well, I guess the Lord knew that he was speaking to men. He got to the point really quick, “Husbands love your wives.” To love someone is a commitment of action and attitude. The statement, “love is a choice” is true. In this Ephesians passage when Paul uses the word love he was referring to Agape love, which is the word for committed, self-sacrificing love that gives preference to others. We spent some time last week looking at this type of love in 1 Cor. 13:4-7. In this passage, there are seven “do” elements and eight “do not” elements explaining what true love is.

E

EXERCISE

For a serious challenge, look at the list below and circle three things on God's love list that you do best, and three in which you need more growth. Ask your wife to do the same and compare notes. Does she see anything differently?

DO'S

Patience

Kindness

Rejoice with Truth

Protect

Trust

Hope

Persevere

DON'TS

Envy

Boast

Arrogance

Rudeness

Seek what you want

Easily Angered

Delight in evil and suffering

Keep up with wrong doings

"He answered, 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?'"

MATTHEW 19:4

"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 of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

1 PETER 3:7

This will come as no surprise to you...men and women are different. We see things differently, we feel things differently, and we communicate differently. 1 Peter 3:7 teaches husbands to live a life where we strive to understand how our wives think and feel, especially when it comes to us demonstrating our love. One of our roles as husbands is to love our wives. Unless we are expressing that love in a way where she feels cared for, nurtured, protected, safe, and cherished we are not fulfilling our responsibility. A great resource is ***Love and Respect*** by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs.

Here is how he defines how our wives interpret our love:

C-O-U-P-L-E

Closeness – she wants you to be close

Openness – she wants you to open up to her

Understanding – do not try to fix her; just listen

Peacemaker – she wants you to say, I am sorry

Loyalty – she needs to know you're committed

Esteem – she wants you to honor and cherish her

There is so much to say about love, understanding how our wives think, and how we as husbands can communicate that love. Our Built 4:2 ministry will offer different marriage classes from time to time on different aspects of our marriages. But today, let's stay on task and continue to look at our role as husbands.

Q

WHY DO YOU THINK THE WORLD'S DEFINITION AND GOD'S DEFINITION OF LOVE ARE SO DIFFERENT?

2. SERVE

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.”

EPHESIANS 5:25-26

Often times, there seems to be an uncomfortable feeling with the Scriptures when the passage in Ephesians 5 verse 22 uses the word submit. It seems to me that these verses (v.25-26) call for a much larger submission. We will look at Ephesians 5:22-24 later, but to understand that passage you need to understand what the wife is submitting to is a husband who: Loves, Serves, and Leads...and in that order.

“Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

MATTHEW 20:28

Let's look at how the husband is to serve. The husband is to serve his wife as Christ served the church. Christ was a servant. He built up the church. He showed passion and compassion for the church. He taught the church and pursued the church. He prayed for the church. He was patient and forgiving with the church. Christ saw needs both spiritual and physical and he provided. He lived by example for the church. He protected the church. He gave His all and even died for the church. When Christian men are servants and follow in the footsteps of Christ as an example by giving themselves up for their wives, then we will see homes that are following God's plan for the family.

Side Note To Dads with Daughters: Do you stress about the man your daughter might marry? Well, the biggest thing you can do to ensure she marries a man of integrity is to be that man yourself. Set the standard. How blessed would our kids be if they saw us treat our marriage as an incredible gift and priority?

How Serving Fuels Your Romance

Here is an example from ***Visionary Marriage*** of how serving can change a marriage:

For many couples, when they are dating or engaged, the relationship is filled with thoughtfulness gestures. A love note on her car. A flirting text to him while he is in class or at the office. Flowers...just because. Do you remember those days?

In marriage counseling, couples frequently tell me that their feelings for one another have changed. They go on to tell me the story of how when they were first married, they were so in love, and they felt so close. But as the years have passed, they grew more distant. Warmth was replaced with distractions. Distractions were replaced with irritation. I asked them to tell me about the positive things they are doing to show their commitment to one another.

Are you going out on dates? Are you giving her flowers? Are you writing him encouraging notes? Are you bringing home gifts for no particular reason?

“No”

“Why Not?”

“We do not feel close and romantic towards one another anymore, so it is hard to do those things.”

These couples have reversed cause and effect! They believe the reason they did all those acts of service and romance earlier in their relationship was because their feelings propelled them. They believe their feelings drove their behavior, but they don't have the whole picture. Why did they feel closeness and warmth for one another? Because the relationship was filled with service and acts of kindness they felt closeness. The behaviors were driving the feelings, as well as feelings driving their behaviors.

I am not saying that we serve our wives in order to manipulate their feelings. God calls us to serve our wives so that we might imitate Christ who gave himself up for His church. But God built a marriage relationship in such a way that service fuels romance. One of the most discouraging things in the world for a husband is when he feels that his wife doesn't like him. Men, do not wait around for your wife's feelings to magically warm towards you. Warmth and closeness do not spontaneously emerge in any relationship. God built a woman's heart to respond to love, service, and a leadership of her husband.



WHAT DO YOU THINK? DOES
BEHAVIOR DRIVE OUR FEELINGS
OR DO FEELINGS DRIVE OUR
BEHAVIOR?

3. Lead

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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.”

EPHESIANS 5:25 - 27

We will have the discussion on the husband's leadership in the home when we look at the wife's role of submission. Both the leadership of the husband and the submission of the wife should be looked at together. John Piper described the husband's leadership in comparison to the leadership of Christ and said, “Lionhearted and Lamblike to refer to the Christian husband as head of his wife is because the husband is called to lead like Jesus who is the Lion of Judah (Revelations 5:5) and the Lamb of God (Revelations 5:6) - he was lionhearted and lamblike, strong and meek, tough and tender, aggressive and responsive, bold and brokenhearted. He set the pattern for manhood.”

Before we have the discussion on what leadership and submission is in the home we need to address the “passivity” of men leading. Answer these four questions in your mind:

- 1) *Is it important to pray with your family?*
- 2) *Is it God's desire for you to pray with your family?*

3) *Is praying with your wife hard physically, mentally, or in any way?*

4) *Is it a struggle to consistently pray with your family?*

If you answered these four questions with a yes, why is it so hard to pray with your family? Prayer is important, God desires for us to pray together, it is easy, but Satan does everything he can to prevent it.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

EPHESIANS 6:12

There is a spiritual battle going on, Satan knows the power of a man leading his family in the things of God – it is what shapes our homes, churches, nation, and world.

Q

WIVES, HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL TO KNOW THAT YOUR HUSBANDS ARE UNDER SPIRITUAL ATTACK WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR CALLING TO BE THE SPIRITUAL LEADERS OF THE FAMILY?

HOW WOULD REMEMBERING THIS CHANGE YOUR APPROACH IN REGARD TO HOW YOU ENCOURAGE HIM TO ENGAGE SPIRITUALLY AT HOME?

GOD'S CALL TO WIVES
Help, Respect, Submit

1. HELP

“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’ Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.”

GENESIS 2:18-22 (ESV)

The Hebrew word for “helper” is *ezer*. It means “help” or “one who helps.” The word occurs 21 times in the Old Testament, including twice in Genesis 2, first in verse 18 and then in verse 20 when Adam named the animals and could not find “a helper comparable to him.”

Holding Hands, Holding Hearts by Richard and Sharon Phillips says:

“To call a woman a helper is not to emphasize her weakness, but her strength. Not to label her as superfluous but as essential to Adam’s condition and to God’s purpose in the world. Helper is a position of dignity given to the woman by God Himself.”

Some women might find it offensive to be identified as their husbands' "helpers," but the title is not a criticism of Eve's insufficiency. Instead, it is an identification of Adam's inadequacy!

Here are four reasons wives should be encouraged being identified as their husband's helper:

1. Ezer describes great strength and support. Ezer is never used in Scripture for something negative, such as a slave. Consider these verses:

· *Deuteronomy 33:29* — "Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help (ezer) and the sword of your majesty!"

· *Ezekiel 12:14* — "I will scatter to every wind all who are around him to help (ezer) him, and all his troops."

Considering this context, identifying woman as her husband's ezer reveals her as a powerful and influential companion.

2. God is called Helper (Ezer). Psalms uses ezer 11 times to describe God as our helper. Some examples include:

· *Psalms 33:20* — "Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help (ezer) and our shield."

· *Psalms 70:5* — "Make haste to me, O God! You are my help (ezer) and my deliverer."

· *Psalms 115:9* — "O Israel, trust in the Lord; He is their help (ezer) and their shield."

The very title used to describe a woman's role is a title used to describe God Himself. Since we do not let

the identification of God as our helper make us think less of God, we should apply that same thinking to wives as their husbands' helpers.

3. The Holy Spirit is called Helper. Helper is the title Jesus used for the Holy Spirit when He promised not to abandon the disciples after His departure:

· *John 14:16* — "I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper."

· *John 14:26* — "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name."

· *John 16:7* — "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you."

It's a privilege for women to carry the same title given to the Holy Spirit! It is clear that the title of ezer or helper is not one of inferiority but of honor.

4. Helping is very commendable. Thinking biblically, helping and serving are two of the most admirable actions we can engage in as Christians. Jesus modeled such behavior and called His followers to do the same in Matthew 20:26–28:

"But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Few actions are commanded as often in Scripture or look more like Christ than helping and serving. As a result, wives should find it encouraging to be called their husbands' helpers. They should not let society's stereotypes influence their thoughts about being a wife. Instead, they should joyfully embrace the role God has given them.

Q

WIVES, WHAT IS YOUR FIRST RESPONSE WHEN YOU HEAR THIS GOD-GIVEN JOB DESCRIPTION FOR A WIFE TO BE A HELPER FIT FOR HER HUSBAND?

HOW HAS CULTURE IMPACTED YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN WIFE?

2. Respect

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

EPHESIANS 5:33 (ESV)

Respect to a husband is as important as love is to a wife. You might say that the way a husband interprets love from his wife is seen through the lens for how much he believes she respects him. This is such a huge deal to men. Wives can feel like their husbands do not love them if they are not expressing that love with Closeness, Openness, Understanding, Peacemaking, Loyalty, and Esteem (C-O-U-P-L-E). In his book, *Love and Respect*, Eggerichs uses the acronym of C-H-A-I-R-S to remind wives of their husband's needs. This is how you spell respect to your husband:

Conquest – Appreciate his desire to work and achieve.

Hierarchy—Appreciate his desire to protect and provide.

Authority—Appreciate his desire to serve and to lead.

Insight—Appreciate his desire to analyze and counsel.

Relationship—Appreciate his desire for shoulder-to-shoulder friendship.

Sexuality—Appreciate his desire for sexual intimacy.

There is much to say about how a wife respects her husband and how that plays a huge role in their relationship and closeness. In fact, it could be one of the biggest ways that a wife is called to be the helper to her husband. There is a lot of truth to the statement that behind every strong man, there is a strong woman. A wife's words, encouragement, “cuts,” praise, criticism, attitudes, and counsel is the largest influence in a man's life. It not only affects how the world sees your husband, it affects how he sees himself. The home is a place where he can recharge and gain strength to face the world or it can be a place where he is told of all of his shortcomings. Which is more of an encouragement to be a godly man in today's world? God has designed your husband's heart to respond to your respect. The more you encourage, the less likely he will be to seek affirmation elsewhere. Let me be brutally honest, a man's ego is fragile, he will protect it, it is always on his radar, and he is always evaluating his worth. So, how a wife encourages and gives counsel to her husband is truly an act of wisdom and an attitude of kindness (respect). The attitude and tone that a wife speaks into her husband's life can shape not only their marriage, but also the Kingdom of God.

“Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.”

PROVERBS 31:25-26

Q

WIVES, HOW CAN YOU VOICE CONCERNS ABOUT THINGS IN YOUR FAMILY'S LIFE AND STILL BE RESPECTFUL?

HUSBANDS, WHAT SPIRIT SHOULD YOU RECEIVE INPUT ABOUT FAMILY MATTERS FROM YOUR WIFE?

3. Submit

“Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

EPHESIANS 5:19-21 (ESV)

In this passage, we see that when we as believers submit to each other it is an expression of being filled with the Holy Spirit. When followers of Christ humble themselves, and place the needs of others over our own preference then Christ is honored.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

EPHESIANS 5:22-33

The book, ***Momentary Marriage***, summarizes this passage:

Once you clarify for people that a husband and a wife should be mutually humble and mutually ready to serve each other and mutually eager to meet each other's needs and build each other up – once you have said all of that, there remains a great uncertainty as to what, if anything, distinguishes the roles of a husband and a wife.

Paul devotes 12 verses beginning with Ephesians 5:22 to unfold the difference in the way a husband and wife should serve each other. You do not need to deny mutual submission to affirm the importance of a unique role of a husband as head and the unique calling of the wife to submit to that leadership.

The simplest way to see this is to remember that Jesus himself bound himself with a towel and got down on the floor and washed his disciple's feet, but not for one minute did any of the apostles in that room doubt who the leader was in that moment. In other words, mutuality of submission and servant hood do not cancel

out the reality of leadership and headship. Servant hood does not nullify leadership; it defines it. Jesus does not cease to be the Lion of Judah when he becomes the lamblike servant of the church.

Paul takes these 12 verses to make the distinction between the role of the husband and the role of the wife. The loving headship of the husband takes his cues from Christ and the willing submission of a wife takes her cues from how the church is to follow Christ.

When sin entered the world, it ruined the harmony of marriage not because it brought the headship and submission into existence, but because it distorted them and made them destructive or nonexistent. Wives, let your falling submission be redeemed by modeling it after God's intentions for the church. Husbands, let your falling headship be redeemed by modeling it after God's intentions for Christ.

Therefore, headship is not a right to control, abuse, or neglect. Rather, it is the responsibility to love like Christ in leading, protecting and providing for our wives and families. Submission is not slavery, coerced or cowering. That's not the way Christ wants the church to respond to his leadership, protection, and provision. He wants the submission of the church to be empowered, willing, grateful, hopeful, and strengthened. In other words, Ephesians 5:21–33 does two things...it guards against the abuse of headship by telling husbands to love like Jesus and it guards against the devaluing of submission by telling wives to respond the way Christ calls the church to submit to Him.



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