

The Biblical Roles of a Wife (part 2)

Today, we come to the last sermon (at least for now) on the subject of marriage. And our topic is the Biblical role of a wife. Two weeks ago, we considered the role of authority and submission within marriage. Today, we will see what God's Word says about two more very important roles for the wife: 1) Helpful Companionship; and 2) Respect. So let's begin.

1. Helpful Companionship. I believe the primary practical purpose of marriage is companionship. And this truth applies to both husband and wife (as we will see in a moment). But, as regards the wife, we see that she was created as Adam's helper. Turn if you will to Gen. 2:18-24. The context is Adam in the Garden of Eden. He is the ONLY human. He is the ONLY one created in the image of God. And God brings all the animals to him and he names them. And when he finishes, the emphasis is that He is alone. The animals are not like him in his nature. AND, none of them can "help" him in his role of dominion over the earth. AND, none of them could be a "companion" to him. And in the great design of God, v. 18 says, **"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."** In 2:20, we read: **"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."** Then, God caused him to sleep deeply. And he took one of his ribs and formed a woman. And he brought her to the man and he said, **"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."** From this text I believe it is clear. Adam was not complete because he lacked a companion, one who would be a "helper" to him.

Now, does this mean that husbands do not "help" their wives. Of course not! As Scott Lewis might say, *"Don't be a bonehead."* Today, when a wife and a husband both work 8-9 hours and come home to a house and kids and the husband sits on his backside and expects his wife to work a 2nd job by herself, this is being a "bonehead." This is unloving! This is unkind! This is a sin! Of course we help one another! But in the context of authority given within the order of creation, Eve was created as Adam's helper. As I've said before, this is not a distinction in equality as human beings created in God's image. This is a distinction in roles. In v. 15 we read, God **"took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."** This is the task of dominion in this world, given to both the man and the woman. But, within marriage, Eve falls under the authority of her husband (the topic of my last sermon). And because of this creation ordinance, she is oriented differently. 1 Cor. 11:8-9 says: **"For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man."** I believe husbands and wives "need" one another, but they "need" one another differently. The cultural mandate (Gen. 1:26-28) which is the requirement to fill and subdue the earth is still in force, and a husband cannot fulfill this task by himself. He needs a suitable companion for this task, a helper. In this regard the husband is oriented to the task; the wife is oriented to him.

A good example may be Kristen's desire to follow me as my wife (ministry overseas). Now, I wouldn't have gone if she hadn't felt called. But at the same time, she always made it clear. Jon, I am married to you. I will follow you. With this in mind, I want to talk a little about companionship in general. The Bible views marriage as a solution to NOT BEING ALONE. Prov. 2:16-17 says: **"So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets**

the covenant of her God.” Mal. 2:14 says: **“Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant . . .”** There have been those who have said that the primary purpose of marriage is having children. Though, it is ONE purpose, it is not the primary one. This view confuses mating and marriage. If you think about it, the human doesn’t need marriage to propagate. Marriage is more than mating. Marriage is first about companionship.

Husband . . . and wife . . . you are the companion to one another. Even after the fall, Adam and Eve were there for one another. Life is short and full of troubles. And as husband and wife, you navigate through this troubled world TOGETHER. I think of both sets of my grandparents. From the depression to WWII to the loss of loved ones, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, etc. they finished their years together literally holding hands as companions, even at the end when they could do nothing but hold hands. The Lord’s presence is our most important source of joy and strength. But God also designed the companionship of marriage for this life. Therefore, as you approach life, you should always be saying, *“We are in this together.”*

Application: In your marriage, do not expect to receive, but instead, give. Do not be selfish. When you got married, you did not vow to get something for yourself. You did not vow to receive companionship. You promised to be a companion to your spouse for the rest of your life. *“Marriage itself is an act of love in which one person vows to meet another’s need for life, no strings attached”* (J. Adams). With this truth in mind, let’s apply this further. This means that when you, husband, or you, wife, complains, **“I am not getting what I want out of marriage,”** this statement doesn’t make sense. For you must reply, *“I did not enter marriage in order to get something for myself.”* But instead, *“I vowed to give something to my spouse.”* Marriage is not a bargain of 50/50. Each spouse promises to give all that is necessary to meet his or her spouse’s need for companionship, whether or not anything comes in return. This means my number one desire as a preacher or a counselor standing before you today is for your to ask, *“How can I please God and my mate?”* not *“How can I please myself.”* To please God by rightly by pleasing one’s spouse is the basic obligation of marriage.

And, who is our example? Today, I preach truths about CHRISTAIN marriage. Christ is our example. Today, as sinners, saved by his grace, He will not leave us as orphans. He will not forsake those he loves. Though we are prone to wander, Christ will not leave us. He is the friend who sticks closer than a brother. For this relationship He came! He left heaven. He took on flesh. He was born. He lived as we do (but without sin). He laid down his life as a sacrifice for a very unlovely people. And his sacrificial death accomplished what He came to do. And we know this because he rose from the dead. And he ascended back to heaven. And He has given us the Holy Spirit. And we are united with him. Therefore, husbands and wives: Treat one another as Christ treats you!

2. Respect. Turn to Eph. 5:33. Here we have a summary statement for both husbands and wives. And particularly for the wife, Paul commands the wife to respect her husband. **“However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”** Again, this doesn’t mean that a wife is not required to love her husband. Nor, is it proper for a husband to disrespect his wife. Of course, Kristen loves me! And of course, I respect Kristen. So, why does Paul use this word “respect” in regard to wives? I think there are a couple reasons. First, we must remember this passage is found in the context of authority and roles within

marriage. Eph. 5:22 says, “**Wives, submit to your own husbands . . .**” (See also Col. 3:18-19 and 1 Pet. 3:7). And we know this is an example of the Church submitting to the authority of Christ. And, as we’ve seen, Jesus the Son and his example of submission to God the Father. Though they are equal in essence, there is still a role of authority. Therefore, wives, respect your husband in his role of husband.

I think another reason is due to the differences between how God designed marriage for the man and marriage for the woman. It seems to me that what a wife particularly needs from her husband is love. And what a husband particularly needs from his wife is respect. Husbands and wives as male and female are oriented differently. Douglas Wilson says that this command is “*given to our respective weaknesses in the performance of our duties.*” Men are commanded to “love your wives.” Wives are commanded to “respect” their husbands. In his Book *Reforming Marriage*, he quotes C.S. Lewis who says “*women tend to think of love as taking trouble for others (which is much closer to the biblical definition), while men tend to think of love as not giving trouble to others.*” Lewis notes that women frequently speak about their husbands in disrespectful ways when they gather together. (As I’ve spoken to men and women through the years, this isn’t normally what men do when they gather.) But when the women leave, they go home and work like crazy to care for their husbands, their kids, their home. Why? Because they love their husbands. Though he may be a jerk, they continue to love. But, respect is another matter. Husbands, on the other hand, have no problem with respect; but they do find it difficult to love their wives.

I will make some general statements (taken from D. Wilson *Reforming Marriage*). I think as husbands and wives, we give what we want from our spouse. In other words, we are often like the man who gave his wife a shotgun for Christmas because he wanted one. When a wife is working on a troubled marriage, she gives to him what *she* would like, and not what God commanded and not what he needs. She loves him, and she tells him so. But does she *respect* and tell him so. Husbands, love is most displayed by communicating security, protection, provision. Your wife needs to know she is NUMBER ONE as you care for her; the same way God cares for us in our covenant relationship. Her need is to be secure in your love for her. Her need is to receive love from you. When a wife respects her husband, the transaction is a bit different. Instead of concentrating on the security of the relationship, respect is directed to his *abilities* and *achievements*—how hard he works, how faithful he is in his duties, how patient he is with the kids, etc.

Let me also say there is a tendency for men to be harsh to their wives as weaker vessels (1 Pet. 3:7). This is a general statement. But for the most part, men are stronger and more aggressive than women. And throughout history, husbands have lorded over their wives in very sinful ways. This is why 99% of abuse is from husband to wife and not the other way around (again, general statement). At the same time, wives tend to bicker and nag and use their “superior communication skills” in sinful ways. This is why Prov. 21:9 says “***It is better to live on the corner of a roof than in the house with a quarrelsome wife.***” Or, “***A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike***” (Prov. 27:15). Therefore, husbands, love your wives, do not treat them harshly. Lead them by serving. Wives, respect your husbands, don’t spend your time nagging and telling them things they already know. Be kind to another.

With these things in mind, let me give some practical ways that wives can show respect to their husband.

Recognize all the ways he blesses you. In other words, think about the good things he is and what he does. After all doesn't Phil. 4:8 say, **"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."** It is amazing how much changes when our thinking changes. Paul's prescription for sanctification in the Christian life is to "put off" the "old man," the "ways of the world," and to "put on" Christ, following his commands and his way of thinking. If you find yourself to be a nagging, irritable, bitter, wife, then replace these things with good things. Start by choosing to dwell on his good. Instead of focusing on his failures as a husband (which he has plenty of them), focus on the good things about him. And you might find, that through obedience to the Word of God, God will grant you repentance and your heart will also change.

Refuse to say, "I told you so." Often in your marriage, your husband will not make good decisions. He will sin against you and your kids. Just because he is the leader of your family does not mean he always makes the right decisions. Sometimes he will do things that are just plain stupid. And you and your family will pay the price. But, I have always found (and you also know this to be true) that saying, *"I told you so,"* or constantly reminding your husband of his faults does not help him, does not respect him. And, it also hurts you. For you yourself are being disobedient to God, which causes further unrest in your mind and heart. Also, much of the time, your husband already knows his faults and may be embarrassed or ashamed by them.

Encourage his successes. As a wife, you are your husband's greatest supporter and encourager. There is nothing that builds me up more than the encouraging words of my wife, especially in areas of accomplishment, whether that be a goal at work or faithfulness in family worship. In these ways, and many more, wives can show respect to their husbands.

Final Applications: I think those listening today are all at different places. 1) No real issues in your marriage as far as fighting and disagreeing, but find yourselves learning from these sermons with an earnest desire to grow in godliness in these areas. If this is you repent, confess your sins one to another, seek God to help you continue. 2) Others are struggling more. Marriage is more down than up these days. You see great sins in your spouse, and maybe some in yourself, I don't know. But, your desire is still for a good marriage. If this is you, repent, confess your sins to one another, seek God to help you. 3) Others are at an even more difficult stage in your marriages. You are just getting by. And maybe there isn't a real desire for your marriage to work. Yet, you have been listening to these sermons and you know them to be true. If this is you, I say the same: repent, confess your sins, seek the Lord's help. And by faith, know that by faith as you look to Christ and his help, better times are ahead.

At the end of the day, we must remember that roles within marriage are designed by God. And God knows what He is doing. He knows what is best. And the closer we align to his designs in our marriages, the greater the blessings, the happier we are in obedience to his commands, the more we picture the beauty of the Triune God and the relations of eternity, and the more we picture the union of Christ to his church. With these things in mind, we can stand in confidence

and say to the world: “Jesus is Lord! His ways are the best!” My desire is for the Word of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit to take great effect in this congregation and in the world. Brothers and sisters, our Christian marriages must be the best as we live in this world and make disciples. I hope these sermons on marriage have been as helpful to you as they have been to me. May God bless your marriages!