

Ephesians 5:21-33

Introduction

I. The roles of husband and wife mentioned in Ephesians are the source of much discussion, debate, and reaction.

II. Two common views

A. Complementarian view: God created husband and wife as equal in importance and personhood, but He gave them unique and complementary roles designed for their fulfillment and the benefit of the marriage

B. Egalitarian view: God created husband and wife as equal in importance and personhood, and their unique roles as mentioned in Scripture are culturally conditioned. Today, husband and wife are to be co-leaders and co-submitters in their marriage.

The Passage

I. Creation: God's original intention for the marriage roles

A. Gen 1:27-29: male and female are created equal and both given authority over creation

B. Gen 2-3: 3 "clues" that imply the husband is to play a leadership role in the marriage

1. God created Adam first and then created Eve as a suitable helper (Gen 2: 7, 15, 18, 21)

a. Firstborn implies a leadership role

b. Helper implies a supportive role

But "helper" does not imply inferiority in any way. The term is often used of God Himself as he "helps" his chosen people during times of adversity.

2. Adam named Eve (Gen 2:23)

a. Naming implies a level of authority/leadership towards them

b. Yet the name "woman" (from man) suggests utter equality between them

3. While both sin, God holds Adam primarily responsible for the Fall (Gen 3:8-9)

SUM: So at Creation, God gave Adam a leadership role that was designed for their mutual fulfillment and benefit

II. Fall: God's original intention is distorted

A. Genesis 3:16

1. You will "desire" your husband

= desire to rule over/control/usurp authority (see Gen 4:6-7)

2. He will "rule" over you

= implies harsh, authoritarian rule rather than loving, gentle leadership

= the husband will use his power for his own interests

See Gen 3:10-12 as an example of this

B. A Mental Picture

The husband is standing tall and strong with a strong arm pushing down the wife's head, and she is kicking, fighting to get out from under his oppressive arm

- C. This is the dark history of marriage ever since the fall
 - Men have used their power/strength to oppress women
 - Women have rebelled against their husbands' leadership
- D. How do you see the effects of the fall at work in your marriage?
 - 1. Wives: where do you find submitting to your husband's leadership to be a painful/frustrating experience? How do you try to control, rule, fight, manipulate, withhold, nag, etc.
 - 2. Husbands: where do you find this leadership responsibility to be a frustrating, painful experience thing? Where do you use your power to serve your own interests?
 - a. Are you too authoritarian, harsh, selfish?
 - b. Are you not willing to accept the responsibilities that come with leadership, whether out of fear, laziness, or indifference?

SUM: so at the Fall, roles that were originally intended for our joy and fulfillment are now distorted so that we experience them as being painful and frustrating.

III. Redemption: marriage roles are redeemed/restored in Christ

- A. The mystery is that our marriages were always supposed to point to the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:32, 23)
 - 1. Redeemed leadership is redefined as Christ-like, servant leadership
 - = use power to serve, protect, provide, build up
 - 2. Redeemed submission is redefined as the submission we are to give to Christ
 - = willing, joyful, creative, courageous submission
- B. Wives (Ephesians 5:22)
 - 1. Submit to your husband in the same way you would desire to submit to Christ (humbly, joyfully, courageously, thoughtfully)
 - 2. Two encouragements for wives
 - a. Submission is not just a woman thing. It's a Christian thing.
 - We are all called to submit within various life contexts in which we find ourselves (see Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:13).
 - c. Christ himself is your ultimate model of submission
 - He submitted his entire life to his heavenly father (Jn 6:38, Mt 26:36-45: Garden of Gethsemane)
- B. Husbands (Ephesians 5:25)
 - 1. Love your wife the way Christ loves the church (= servant leadership. He used his power and authority to sacrificially give himself up in loving service for the church, putting the church's needs ahead of his own—see Phil 2)
 - 2. Two encouragements for husbands
 - a. Sacrificial servant leadership is not just a male thing. It's a Christian thing.

We are all called to sacrificial servant leadership within the various life contexts in which we find ourselves (as parents, bosses, coaches, teachers, etc)

b. While servant leadership may feel weak at times, it is still strong leadership (when Jesus washes his disciples' feet, everyone in the room still knows who the leader is)

IV. Two closing prayers to pray this week

A. "God, show me that this is a beautiful picture of marriage and that stepping into it will lead to my ultimate joy and fulfillment."

1. A Mental Picture: The husband is bending down and using his strength to lift up his wife above himself (putting her needs ahead of his own).

Meanwhile, she is bowing down to him in response as a posture of respect for his leadership.

2. Rather than do away with the roles of husband and wife because we don't like the idea of them, we should fill the roles with Christ-like content.

B. "God, show me where I need to submit to this picture. What things in my heart need to die/be crucified in order for me to embrace this picture of marriage? What things need to be let go of in order to faithfully fulfill my role in my marriage?"

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. As you look at the two views of marriage as articulated in the Introduction of the outline, where do you find yourself landing and why?
3. Were the "clues" mentioned from Gen 2-3 enough to convince you that God originally intended Adam/husbands to have a unique leadership role in marriage? How do you interpret the story?
4. What was your response to the mental picture given towards the end of the sermon (regarding a husband kneeling down in his strength to lift his wife up and his wife bowing down in a posture of respect)?
5. Men, as you consider the responsibilities of spiritual leadership in a family, what are some areas that feel particularly challenging to you? What are some specific ways you'd like to grow in being a sacrificial servant leader to your wife?
6. Women, as you consider Paul's admonition to respect and submit to your husband, what are some areas that feel particularly challenging to you? What are some specific ways you'd like to do a better job of supporting your husband?