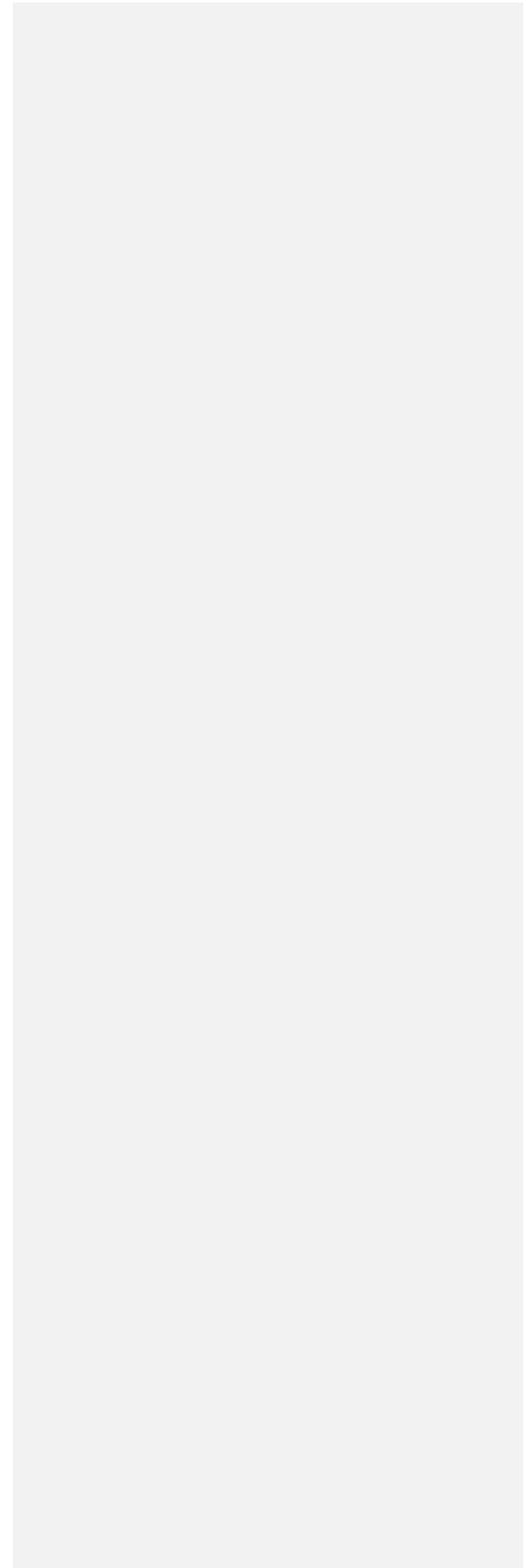




THE VERTICAL MARRIAGE

THE WIFE'S ROLE IN MARRIAGE



THE MARRIAGE WHEEL

WIFE'S ROLE

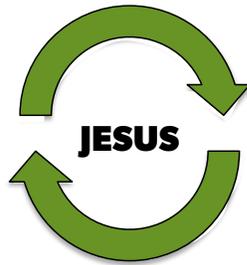
FOLLOW

FINISH

FAN

WIFE WANTS:
SECURITY

**WIFE'S
TENDENCY:**
NAG



HUSBAND'S ROLE

LOVE

LEARN

LEAD

HUBAND WANTS:
SIGNIFICANCE

**HUSBAND'S
TENDENCY:**
NEGLECT

THE VERTICAL WIFE:

As a wife God has given you a unique opportunity of bringing Him glory. His plan is for our marriages to glorify Him – to display or reflect what is true of Him. What a joy to think about the fact that we can reflect the character of God to our husbands in a very personal and beautiful way.

List some attributes of God (i.e. forgiveness, mercy, kindness) that you can be displaying as you relate to your husband. Put a star by the ones in which you need to grow the most to be an accurate reflection of God's character:

In this lesson we will study three key biblical words that explain the wife's role in marriage: submission, helper and respect.

I. GOD WANTS WIVES TO BE FOLLOWERS

Though not "culturally acceptable," the Biblical word for following is submission. However, when we understand submission from God's perspective it is a beautiful picture of Christ and the church.

SUBMISSION IS NOT JUST A WOMAN'S ISSUE.

Though in some ways we are all called to submit this does not come naturally for any of us. Consider the following biblical ideas:

1. The problem with submission began in heaven.

Isaiah 14:13: *But you said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north."* The choice we face is to be like Jesus Christ who was totally submissive to the Father to the extent of death (John 5:30, 6:38, 8:28-29, 14:31 and Luke 22:42) or to be like Satan, our adversary, who seeks our destruction (1 Peter 5:8).

2. Lack of submission was at the forefront of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

Satan tempted Eve by telling her that she could be her own god and no longer have to be in submission to the plan and program of the Creator.

Genesis 3:4 *"And the serpent said to the woman, 'You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"* Satan was in essence telling Eve "You can run your own life. You don't have to submit to anyone else's authority – not even God's."

3. Unwillingness to submit to God is a problem for all humans.

Isaiah 53:6 *"All we like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."*

All humans must subject themselves to authorities:

List authorities to which husbands and wives alike must submit:

THE BIBLICAL COMMAND FOR SUBMISSION

Eph. 5:22-24: *"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." (see also Col. 3:18, 1 Peter 3:1)*

From Ephesians chapter 1 list five answers to this question: *Who am I in Christ?*

From where did this identity come from? Why is that important?

WHAT SUBMISSION IS NOT:

1. **Submission does not mean that as wives we are inferior to our husbands.**

The greatest example of this truth is how Jesus Christ submitted to the Heavenly Father.

- John 5:30: *"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of Him who sent me."*
- John 6:38: *"For I have down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me."*

- John 14:31: *"But I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father."*
- Luke 22:42: *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done."*
- I Corinthians 11:3: *"But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."*
- Genesis 1:27: *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."* Both man and woman were created in the image of God.
- I Peter 3:7: Calls husband and wife *"heirs together of the grace of life."*

CONCLUSION: As Christ is not inferior to the Father but subordinated Himself to the Father in order to carry out God's plan of redemption, so the wife submits herself to her husband so God's plan for the family can be carried out.

2. **Submission does not mean that our husbands are infallible.**

When they fail or make a decision with which we do not agree, this should not surprise us because the Gospel tells us they are sinners. When we submit to our husbands it is not because they are worthy but because Christ is worthy and He has called us to submission.

3. **Submission does not mean that we as wives cannot think or be productive.**

Look at these action descriptions for the Proverbs 31 woman. Underline the words that indicate she was highly productive.

- She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.
- She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.
- She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
- She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong.
- She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.
- She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.

- She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.
- She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.
- She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.
- She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

WHAT SUBMISSION IS:

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1. Submission is ranking under

“Voluntarily place oneself under.” The Greek verb for “submit” is a military term, which means to be ranked under.

Regarding the Scriptural call to the wife to be subject to her husband, it is her ranking herself under her husband’s authority. She has a different rank, not an inferior position. This ranking under is for the purpose of order and harmony in the home. Remember though that you voluntarily placing yourself under the leadership of a sinful man.

List some examples of disorder and disharmony you have seen as a result of your reluctance to submit:

2. Submission is a picture of the church submitting to and obeying Christ.

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.”*

“The husband is to mirror the sacrificial love of Christ by laying down his life for his wife, and the wife is to exemplify the church’s joyful submission to Christ by following her husband’s leadership.” (Feminine Appeal, Carolyn Mahaney, p. 138)

3. Submission, as all of God-ordained authority, is God’s means of protection for the wife.

All of God’s commands to us are a means of grace. God doesn’t give us rules and regulations to frustrate us but rather to protect us and to say, “this is how life will go best for you.” When we choose to sin we choose to not operate in how God has created the world to function.

Submission allows the wife to function according to God's wise, kind and loving design. God's ordained authority provides spiritual covering and protection.

In Christian Living in the Home, Jay Adams wrote: "Submission does not remove freedom, it allows for it. When is the train freer – when it is bumping over the hillside off the track or when it is smoothly running along the track, confined or restricted, if you will, to the track? It is freer when it is where it ought to be, doing what it was intended to do. Restricted to the track means freedom. Confined to the track means ability to perform as it was intended to perform as it was intended to perform. What really brings freedom? Getting on the right track."

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4. Having an unsaved or ungodly husband does not negate the command.

1 Peter 3:1-2 *"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, when they see your respectful and pure conduct."*

"Our submission to our husband whether or not he is a Christian, whether or not he is obeying God, preaches a lovelier and more powerful sermon than our mouth ever could." (Elizabeth George, A Woman After God's Own Heart, p. 69)

Note of exception: A request from the husband that would cause the wife to sin exempts the wife from submission to her husband in that particular case (cf. Acts 5:29). He has removed himself from God's chain of authority and she must obey her higher authority, God. "Even though a husband has God-given authority over his wife, only God has absolute authority over her. In other words, God's authority is higher. So, if her husband asks her to sin, she must 'obey God rather than man.'" (Excellent Wife, Martha Peace, p. 140) For examples of how husbands might ask their wives to sin, see Excellent Wife pgs 140-142)

5. Submission is a spiritual matter

"as unto the Lord." (Eph 5:22)

When a wife places herself under her husband's authority, she is really placing herself under God's authority because it is His design and command. Scripture does not call us to place our hope in our husbands, but in God.

1 Peter 3:3-5: *"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands..."*

Submission, at the heart level, simply trusts in God who controls every detail of our lives for His glory and our good (Ps. 139:16, Rom. 8:28-29). It is a display of our confidence in our sovereign Creator and Redeemer.

6. Lack of submission includes more than outright disobedience.

It includes:

- Arguing
- Pouting
- Cold shoulder
- Over-talking, interrupting
- Speaking in demeaning way to or about him
- Making important decisions without consulting him
- Disregarding his wishes or advice
- Knowingly doing things that annoy him

What other ways do you see lack of submission displayed?

These responses are always sinful no matter who we are responding to, but they are especially offensive to God when we used these methods with our husbands because he has specifically commanded us to respect and submit to our husbands.

II. GOD WANTS WIVES TO BE FINISHERS

Genesis 2:18: *“Then the LORD God said, it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”*

Though only GOD can complete, or “finish” a man, God has also given wives to help husbands be complete here on earth.

Here are some reasons:

A. It was not good for man to be alone.

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” There are two Hebrew ways of saying “not good.” The first means something is lacking – like a food lacks enough salt. The second means “positively bad.” This second usage is what we see in this passage. Why was Adam alone, without Eve, “positively bad?”

- To best glorify God.

It all goes back to God’s purpose in creation – to magnify Himself. Man in particular was to be God’s image bearer. God is 3 in 1. Only in union with another like himself could man accurately reflect the mutual love, honor, purposeful accomplishment and communal joy

that we see in the Godhead." (Helper by Design, Elyse Fitzpatrick, p. 36)

B. To be his finisher is to reflect the character of God.

We tend to think of the term "helper" as indicative of someone insignificant. For example, we think of the "carpenter's helper" as the one who isn't as skilled as the carpenter and therefore does the menial tasks the boss doesn't want to do. We say of children when we ask them to pick up their toys, "You are mommy's little helper." The biblical concept of "helper" is far different.

1. God Himself is called our "helper."
 - Psalm 54:4 *"Behold, God is mine helper..."*
 - Psalm 46:1 *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*
 - Isaiah 41:10 *"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."*
2. The Holy Spirit's name "Comforter" actually means helper; one called along side to help. (John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7)

"In a word then, a wife who is reflecting God's helping character desires to sustain or uphold her husband, she strengthens, comforts, seeks to protect him...In her heart he finds shelter and protection from the world; he finds a companion who offers him what he really needs; help in his God-given calling." (Helper by Design, Elyse Fitzpatrick, p. 39)
3. Being a helper is a way to help the husband fulfill his role of leader. John Piper defines submission as "the divine calling to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts." (from article by John Piper, "A vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible" in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, pg. 53)

God has granted each of us with unique gifts for the purpose of using them to support our husbands. We offer suggestions, ideas, wisdom, insight, prayer, encouragement and admonishment. As we lovingly and humbly use our giftedness in these ways we help them to lead and we fulfill our role as wives.

Ask your husband what you do (or can start doing) that help him most. List below.

III. GOD WANTS WIVES TO BE A FAN.

Eph. 5:33 *“Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.*

The idea here is to be respectful of your husband.

- A. The word “respect” means -- to highly regard, notice, honor, prefer, esteem, praise, admire exceedingly, treat as special. The verb used means to continuously choose to respect.
1. Respect as described above is in just an outward show, but an inward heart attitude out of obedience to God. It includes how we think of our husbands, how we treat them and how we represent them to others.
 2. Considering the opposite of respect is a good way to evaluate if we are our husbands.

Do you ever:

- Make fun of him either directly to him or to others?
- Cut him down privately or publically?
- Purposely (or carelessly) make him feel or look stupid?
- Speak sharply, demeaning, critically or sarcastically
- Become short and impatient with him?
- Roll your eyes, sigh, cross your arms, look away while he is speaking?
- Disregard him while he is speaking to you?
- Interrupt him while he is speaking?

What other ways can a wife show disrespect to her husband?

- B. The responsibility of the wife is to “respect” her husband.

What if he doesn’t deserve respect?

Respect that is required of the wife is not based on the husband’s character or abilities, but on his position. *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”* (I Corinthians 11:3)

"So even if we do not feel particularly respectful today, or though we may not think our husbands have done anything worthy of respect lately; or even if we reckon ourselves to be more capable, intelligent or godly than our husbands – none of these reasons exempt us. Respect is a decision we make to obey God's word. He has set the husband as the head and we must honor that position regardless." (Feminine Appeal, Carol Mahaney, pg. 148)

If a husband is not glorifying God in his daily life, according to the following passages, his wife is not without hope. God has given her offense weapons in her fight for God's glory to be displayed in her husband's life and for his good.

Underline the offense weapons for a wife to use for God's glory and her husband's benefit.

Colossians 4:6 *"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, to that you may know how you ought to answer each person..."*
(*Speaking with grace = speaking in a way they don't deserve*).

C. The dangers of disrespect.

1. Habitually disrespectful thinking, acting and speaking develops patterns of communication that severely damages the husband / wife relationship and alienates the husband. Proverbs 12:4 "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones."
2. Disrespect leads to discontent. Discontent blinds you his good qualities, (but gratitude opens your eyes to his good qualities.)
3. The husband may become angry, defensive, withdrawn and loose motivation/to be the spiritual leader in the home.
4. You train your children in disrespect for their father.

Respect Self-Assessment Test

(from Excellent Wife, Martha Peace, pg. 115-117)

Put a check mark by the areas in which, by God's grace, you intend to improve.

1. Do you speak to your husband in a condescending, "put down" manner?
 - "What's the matter with you?"
 - "Anybody could have done better than you did."
 - "My Dad would have never done that."
 - "Can't you do anything right?"
 - "I should have known better than to depend on you."
 - "Don't be stupid."
 - "That's ridiculous!"
 - "You old fool!"
 - "You're too slow. I'll do it myself."
2. Do you treat your husband in private as respectfully as you do you pastor, your neighbor or your friends in public?
3. Does your body language show disrespect by angry looks, looks of disgust, crossed arms, etc.?
4. Do you talk for your husband or interrupt him?
5. Do you try to intimidate or bully your husband by making threats, verbally attacking him, crying or in some other way manipulating him to have your way?
6. Do you bring up his shortcomings to others?
7. Do you inappropriately contradict him in front of others?
8. Do you compare him unfavorably with other men?