



## [Genesis 3:16](#)

(16) Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

*King James Version*

The second of Eve's curses deals with her relationship with her husband. It explains why many marriages fail and why many of the rest are unhappy. As mentioned before, human relationships are just as likely to fail as to succeed when men and women rely on human knowledge rather than revealed, godly wisdom.

The NKJV's rendering of the latter half of [Genesis 3:16](#) is typical of many translations: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." From this we can see that the two clauses cannot be parallels. Instead, they form a statement of action and reaction. Because the woman "desires" her husband, he will "rule over" her.

Yet this does not make much sense as a curse. Why should a woman's desire for her husband cause him to dominate her? Most men would gladly accept his wife's desires for him, causing him to treat her more gently rather than roughly, as is implied in this verse. How are we to understand this?

The key is in the word "desire," translated from the Hebrew *tesuqah*, which the Brown, Driver and Briggs lexicon calls "unusual and striking" (p. 1003). It occurs only three times in the Old Testament: here, [Genesis 4:7](#), and Song 7:10. It can carry the sense of sexual longing (as in the Song of Songs), but its usage in [Genesis 4:7](#) shows another side, that of a desire to overcome or defeat another: "[Sin's] desire is for you, but you should rule over it." This latter meaning fits [Genesis 3:16](#) better than the former.

Thus, [God](#) is saying that a woman's desire will be to gain the upper hand over her husband, but because she is the weaker vessel, her husband will put her down by force, if need be. The curse is that, in the main, women will lose the battle of the sexes.

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Genesis 3:16 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

History bears this out. Until the advent of women's rights movements, women were virtually their husband's property, treated as heir-producing machines, given little freedom, and forced to serve their husband's every whim. In many cultures, men bought and sold women like cattle. Some cultures maintain this custom even today.

Only where true Christianity flourishes is there any real easing of this curse. [Ephesians 5:22-33](#) teaches how we can decrease its effects within our marriages—by emulating the virtues of Christ's relationship with the church. Thus, wives are told to submit rather than contend, and husbands are commanded to [love](#) rather than dominate. It takes conscious effort to overcome the evil, ingrained habits of 6,000 years of misguided practice.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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