

Marriage And The Bride Of Christ (Part 3)

The Order of Creation

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In my last two sermons we looked at marriage in general because of the way the Apostle Paul presents marriage to us. Now we come to a more detailed consideration of the biblical teaching of the New Testament and of the entire Bible.

Everything that is done in the realm of the church is different from what is done outside (in the world). We are confronted by the authority that we have in the Word. It is important not to let our own opinions on marriage overshadow the teaching of the Word of God. Most people follow the pop culture's standards or the religious traditions of their church rather than what God has ordained.

In my previous sermon we saw that certain great principles are laid down so clearly that marriage is shown to be a much more important institution than anything the world can comprehend. But we are given the understanding so that we can appreciate that this is some of the most profound teaching found anywhere in the Scriptures concerning the Church.

In Part 2 we looked at general principles; let me remind you of just 12 of them:

1. Marriage is a reflection of and patterned after Christ's relation to the church. The roles of husbands and wives present God's ideal for all marriages at all times, as exemplified by the relationship between the bride of Christ (the church) and Christ Himself (the Son of God).
2. The fact that we have become Christians does not mean that we will be automatically right in all we think and in all we do.
3. The fact that a person has become a Christian will probably raise for him new problems that he has never had to confront before.
4. Christianity is a way of life; it has something to say about the whole of our life, not just parts of it.
5. Christian teaching never contradicts or undoes fundamental biblical teaching with respect to life and living. There is no contradiction between the New Testament and the Old Testament.
6. There is an intimate relationship between doctrine and practice. Each helps the other and each illustrates the other.
7. Always consult God when trying to work out marriage problems.
8. The spirit or the attitude of the relationship of wives and husbands, and husbands and wives must always be the "Submitting of yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ"

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and "As to the Lord."

9. The Christian view of marriage is governed entirely and solely by the teaching of the Scriptures. If not, then it is not Christian, it is worldly and pagan.
10. Marriage is not a human contrivance or arrangement, but it is God's ordinance, something instituted by God, something that God in His infinite grace and kindness has appointed and ordained and prepared and established for men and women.
11. The terms of the relationship are clearly and plainly stated.
12. Marriage can only be fully understood as we understand the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the Church.

Having looked at those general principles we can now go to the specific application. The first thing we notice is that an injunction is given to wives. You may remember we saw that the wives are put before their husbands for one reason only in Ephesians 5—that the Apostle Paul is dealing with submission.

The principle in verse 21 of Ephesians 5 is, "Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ."

In this matter of submission, Paul says,

Ephesians 5:22-24 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

The matter we have to consider is this submission of wives to husbands. Paul not only reminds us of that, but he tells us very plainly and clearly that it is your duty to do this, as it is the duty of all of us to submit to one another.

Paul says that this is a very special thing. The main point that emerges here is this issue of submission. That is what he is emphasizing. And so, Paul helps us to look into this. It is not an injunction that is merely thrown out at random.

Paul gives us first of all a great motive for this submission, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." We must be clear about this phrase because it can be, and has been, misunderstood. It does not mean, "Wives, submit to your own husbands in exactly the same way as you submit to the Lord." It does not mean that, because that is going too far.

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The submission of every wife, and certainly of every Christian, male or female, to the Lord Jesus Christ is an absolute one. Paul does not say that about the relationship of the wives to the husbands.

We are all the slaves of Jesus Christ; but a wife is never told to be the slave of her husband. Our relationship to Christ is one of complete, entire, absolute submission. Wives are not exhorted to do that.

Romans 6:22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

I Corinthians 7:22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.

It is important to differentiate between our duty to Christ and a wife's duty to her husband. Husbands and wives are slaves to God and Christ, but a wife is never a slave to her physical husband. "Wives, submit to your own husbands" because it is part of your duty to the Lord, because it is an expression of your submission to the Lord.

In other words, you are not doing it only for your husband; you are doing it primarily for the Lord Himself. It is a repetition of the general point made in Ephesians 5:21, "Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ." A proper submissive attitude requires humility and compliance.

You do not do it, in the final analysis, for the husband's sake; the ultimate reason and motive does not rest there; the submission is to the Lord. You are doing it for Christ's sake; you are doing it because you know that He exhorts you to do it, because it is well pleasing to the Father that you do it. It is part of Christian behavior; it is part of your discipleship.

I Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Everything we do is done for the glory of God, to please Him, because we know that He wants us to obey Him. So at the beginning Paul removes any controversy and admonishes us to approach it in the right spirit—the right attitude.

If wives are anxious to please God and Jesus Christ and to carry out their will, wives will

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submit to their husband, not as a slave, but as a helper comparable to him. There can be no more compelling motive for any action than this; and every Christian wife who is concerned above everything else to please the Father and His Son, will find no difficulty in this paragraph in Ephesians 5:22-24. In truth, it is a delight.

Christian wives show that they are no longer worldly, that you no longer belong to the world. And these other people in the world (living as they do) assert their own rights, and display the arrogance that leads to all the chaos that characterizes life in the world.

A successful marriage is a way of displaying the hope that is in you. This society ridicules and mocks Christian marriages. Rejecting the Christian marriage and way of life by mimicking worldly marriages, or because you are too embarrassed about doing the right thing is not a valid reason for neglecting such a high calling as God has given you.

Here is what Peter tells us:

I Peter 3:13-17 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

We are to show in every detail of our lives that once we become a Christian we are different in every respect. So wives in submitting themselves to their own husbands can display this great characteristic of God's way of life. That is the great motive; and we should be moved by it, and energized by it, so that no other way will appeal to us.

If we have submitted ourselves to Jesus Christ, and we are concerned about His Name and His honor above everything else, no other way will sway us.

Let me give you two additional reasons WHY every Christian wife should submit herself to her own husband. The first is what can be called the order of creation; and the second is that marriage is something that belongs to the realm of the relationship of the church to Jesus Christ.

Both reasons are in Ephesians 5:23:

Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

"For (or, because)," here, is the first reason. The second reason is, "As also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body."

Look at the first reason, "The husband is head of the wife." This is a part of the order of creation, a part of God's ordinances, of God's will, of what God has stated with regard to this relationship between men and women. The first mention of this teaching is found right back at creation in Genesis 2. Notice how the references in the New Testament all lead us back there. They send us back to when the order of creation was established.

The crucial verse is verse 16 of Genesis 3, which tells us what God said to the woman as the result of her listening to Satan and his temptation, and her eating the forbidden fruit.

Genesis 3:16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

That is an addition to chapter 2, and so, we must pay attention to it.

These words from the Eternal indicate that there will be an ongoing struggle between the woman and the man for leadership in the marriage relationship. The leadership role of the husband and the complementary relationship between husband and wife that were ordained by God before Adam and Eve sinned were deeply damaged and distorted by sin.

This especially takes the form of excessive desire (on the part of the wife) and domineering rule (on the part of the husband). The Hebrew term here translated, "desire" (teshuqah), is rarely found in the Old Testament. But it appears again in Genesis 4:7 (in a statement that closely parallels Genesis 3:16) where the Eternal says to Cain, just before Abel's murder, that sin's "desire is for you," (i.e. to master Cain), and that Cain must "rule over it" (which he immediately failed to do, by murdering his brother, as seen in Genesis 4:8).

Similarly, the ongoing result of Adam and Eve's initial sin of rebellion against God had disastrous consequences for their relationship: First, Eve would have the sinful "desire" to oppose Adam and to assert leadership over him, reversing God's plan for Adam's leadership in marriage.

But second, Adam would also abandon his God-given, pre-sin role of leading, guarding, and caring for his wife, replacing this with his own sinful, distorted desire to "rule" over Eve. Consequently, one of the most tragic results of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God is an ongoing, damaging conflict between husband and wife in marriage, driven by the sinful behavior of both in rebellion against their respective God-given roles and responsibilities in marriage.

Remember that, in a sense, we are dealing with marriage and not with the status of woman (or of all women). Certainly we can deduce from the Scriptures the teaching with regard to women in general, and such matters as the question of women entering the work force and so on. But we are not dealing with that. We are dealing specifically with the issue of marriage.

In Ephesians 5:22 Paul is addressing wives. He is not addressing unmarried women in this context. There is teaching about that, but it does not fall within the scope of this sermon except indirectly.

First notice that the emphasis is put constantly on the fact that the man was created first, not the woman. So there is a natural priority for man. The Scriptures also emphasize the fact that woman was made out of man, taken out of the man, and meant to be a help for man, "A helper comparable for him."

None of the animals could supply that need. Adam gave names to cattle, to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And it was because there was no helper for man among the animals, that woman was created.

That is the basic teaching, and notice that the apostles stress that man was created first. But not only that, man was also made the "lord of creation." It was to man that this authority was given over the animal kingdom; it was man who was called on to give them names.

Here are indications that man was put into a position of leadership, authority, and power. He makes the decisions; he gives the rulings. That is the fundamental teaching with regard to marriage.

The Weaker Vessel

The Apostle Peter underlines all this in that significant phrase of his, where he tells the husbands to give honor to the wife, "As to the weaker vessel."

I Peter 3:7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

What does he mean by, "weaker vessel?" It is obvious that he means what is taught so plainly in the early chapters of Genesis and everywhere else in the Bible. It means primarily this whole issue of man's management and leadership.

Man, physically speaking, is naturally stronger than woman; he was designed and made to be this way. It is easy to prove this fact that he is both anatomically and physiologically stronger, but to spend time refuting any argument against man's superior physical strength would be a silly and complete waste of time; so, we move on.

Woman is constituted in a different manner; and when the apostle Paul says that she is the "weaker vessel," he is not speaking in any derogatory sense at all. He is simply saying that she is essentially different from man, and that man must always bear that in mind.

He must not treat woman as if she were his equal in these respects. Man must remember that she has been made differently, and that he is to respect her and to honor her, to guard and to protect her accordingly.

Complement

So the basic fundamental teaching is that man is to be the head of the wife, and he is to be head of the family. God made him in that way, endowed him with faculties and powers, and propensities that enable him to fulfill this; and so God made woman so that she should be the "complement" of the man.

Now the word "complement" carries in itself the concept of submission; her main function is to make up a deficiency in the man. Let me repeat that. Her main function is to make up a deficiency in the man, to balance the marriage relationship as a harmonizing match.

That is why these two become one flesh; the woman is the complement of the man. But the emphasis, therefore, is that man is responsible not only for himself, but for his wife, and for his family ultimately in all matters.

The wife is to help him, to support him, to aid him, and to do everything she can in order to enable him to function in the position God has placed him to be. That is the basic teaching with regard to the relationship of husbands and wives as laid down in the order of Creation, the fundamental rules with regard to the life of mankind in this world.

That is how it was before Adam and Eve rebelled. While man and woman were still relatively perfect, while they were in the Garden of Eden without any sin. That was how God ordained it. But sadly something happened—they sinned!

Its importance is made very clear, especially by the apostle Paul in I Timothy 2.

I Timothy 2:11-15 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

Notice that Paul makes a great deal of the fact that it was the woman who was deceived and sinned first, and not the man. So Eve's sin has made a further difference. Genesis 3:16 establishes that. Here it is again,

Genesis 3:16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

From that we can deduce that childbirth would probably have been painless had it not been for Eve's sin. And in addition, it not only reiterates the leadership and the management already established before Adam and Eve's sin; it underlines it—"He shall rule over you."

There is a new element, which is the woman's subordination to man has been increased as the result of Eve's sin. God's edict was pronounced for this reason, that the very essence of Eve's sin, and of what led up to it, and what happened to her, was that Eve,

being confronted by the insinuation and the suggestion of Satan, instead of doing what she should have done, what she had been taught to do, namely, to go to Adam and to consult him about the question, took the decision upon herself, and put herself into the position of leadership.

She dealt with the situation, and as the result of her dealing with the situation, instead of taking it to Adam, as she should have done, she sinned. And Eve involved Adam in the sin likewise, and so the whole human race entered into a life of sin because Adam and Eve had broken the ice, and opened the floodgates.

So the initial sin was that the woman failed to realize her place and her position in the marriage relationship, she usurped authority and power and position, and thereby brought calamity and chaos to pass on the whole world. That is not only stated in Genesis 3:16, it forms the whole basis of the apostle Paul's statement with regard to women taking authority, and teaching and preaching, in I Timothy 2.

But immediately there is an objection, an objection that is at least frequently thought, if not spoken. Even women in God's church who claim to believe the Scriptures as the infallible inspired Word of God have a tendency to shrug this off as only the view of the apostle Paul.

Many women in mainstream Christianity believe Paul was anti-feminist; a man who held the view that was believed to be so commonly taken of women at that time. They emphasize that at that time the woman was in a debased position.

Everybody throughout the world then held that view; women were little more than 'goods' or slaves. And as this was true even of the Jews, Paul was just a typical Jewish Pharisee, so goes the argument today.

It is not surprising that people, who do not believe that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, say such things. They do not hesitate to say, not only that Paul was wrong, but that Jesus Christ was wrong. They make themselves the authority; they think they know better than an apostle of God. They sin the same sin that Eve did—rebellion against authority.

It is fruitless to argue with such people. You cannot have any discussion with them at all, because it is not merely a question of putting up with my opinion against theirs; there just is not anything else to say about it other than that to ignore God's inspired word is not Christian and is sin.

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Granted, the view of woman at the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles was debased. But it was not the religious Jews' view, because they had these Scriptures and many believed them. And it certainly was not the apostle Paul's view. Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 11:11-12:

I Corinthians 11:11-12 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.

A man does not have a nobler birth than woman, neither does woman have a nobler birth than man; they are both created by God and come from God's creative design and power. Paul appreciated the fact that in Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female.

Galatians 3:27-28 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

This was a vital part of his teaching of the Gospel to say that, "In this matter of salvation men and women are equal, and a woman has an equal opportunity in conversion and spiritual growth with man." Paul was thrilled that this is true! There was no human being who spoke more delicately about womanhood, and of the true glory of womanhood, than the Apostle Paul.

Also, notice that he does not limit himself to giving us an account of the duty of the wives towards the husband only, he always tells us about the duty of the husband to the wife also; and he shows that the Christian husband's view of womanhood, and of women, and of his wife, is more exalted than anything the world has ever known.

He puts everything into its right position; he always gives us the two sides. But apart from all that, Paul never puts these things forward as his own opinion; he always goes back to Genesis, and to the order of creation. In effect, Paul says, "This is not my opinion; this is what God has laid down."

Paul's only concern is that the truth of God is known, and that what God ordained should be put constantly into practice. So this tendency to say that it is only Paul's opinion is a denial of the Scripture. If we say we believe the Bible is the infallible and inspired Word of God, then we must not speak as the world does about the apostle Paul; because when he writes he not only quotes the Scripture, he also writes as an

inspired apostle.

Remember how the apostle Peter tells us to listen to the apostle Paul. He says that some people extract Paul's teachings and his writings to their own destruction.

II Peter 3:14-18 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The critics are not really arguing with Paul, they are arguing with God. At the same time they are putting themselves into the contradictory position of saying that they believe the Bible only as long as it does not contradict what they happen to believe as products of this present feminist pop culture.

Now that we have dealt with that foolish objection, let me sum up the position again. Woman, according to this teaching, the wife, is given a certain status. To be subject to her husband does not mean that she is the slave of her husband, it does not mean that she is inferior to her husband, no, not for a moment!

We will see this more clearly when we consider what the apostle Paul says about the duty of the husband to the wife. He is saying that the woman is different, that she is the complement of the man.

Paul does, however, prohibit woman from trying to be manly, masculine that is, that a woman must not try to behave like a man, nor shall a woman seek to usurp the place, the position, and the power that have been given to man by God Himself.

Womanhood is not slavery; we must recognize and realize what God has ordained. Therefore the wife should rejoice in her position. She has been made by God to help man to function according to God's will.

She should be the helper of her husband, the one to whom he can confide in and look

for encouragement. She is a helper comparable to him. She has the same opportunity for eternal life and the same potential for position and reward in God's Kingdom. Together husband and wife must live to the glory of God.

An illustration may help this point. The idea of leadership or management causes some people to immediately resist, because they seem to think that it carries with it the idea of an inherent and essential inferiority. But that is not true.

This whole idea of the leadership of the man in the marriage relationship is comparable in some limited ways to that of military troops to their leader. An army would be completely chaotic if each one had the right to decide what is going to be done next.

As I mentioned earlier, the moment a person joins the armed forces he is subjecting himself, he is saying that he is going to obey the command that comes down to him, no matter what he may think of it; it is his duty to do that.

He is granting this right of command to the one who is set above him; and though he may have his own ideas and opinions, he now foregoes them; he submits and he is in subjection.

Or, here is another illustration that may help clarify this. Think of a group of men on a sports team playing football or soccer. The first thing they have to do is to appoint a captain. They are not all captains; if they were they would have a hard time winning a match.

The first thing they do is to appoint one among themselves as a captain. He may not even be the best player on the team, but they decide that on the whole he has the greatest gift of leadership. So they make him captain, and having done so, order is the result and chaos is avoided.

Now the Bible teaches that God has set man, the husband, in that position. So Paul says to the wives, "Wives, submit to your own husbands" for the reason that the husband has been appointed the head.

But a still greater reason is found in I Corinthians 11, where we are told that the husband is the head of the wife, that Christ is the Head of the man, and God is head of Christ. Let us see it in writing for ourselves to reinforce that this is God speaking through His apostle Paul.

I Corinthians 11:3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is

Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

There is no disputing this. It is absolutely true! That is the positive explanation of this important teaching that alone gives us a true view of marriage. The sense is she is subordinate to him and in all circumstances—in her demeanor, her clothing, her conversation, in public and in the family circle. This does not mean that she is policed by her husband; it means she checks with him on major decisions.

On a side note, there is a foolish argument that comes up occasionally. Somebody says,

"I know many instances where the wife is a much abler person than the husband, much more gifted in almost every respect. Should such a brilliantly gifted woman subject herself to her husband, to a man who is inferior?"

There is only one answer to that argument: The person who frames it is arguing against God. God knows all about such cases. What God says is that if that gifted, brilliant woman is not subjecting herself to her own husband on things that do not go against God's way of life she is sinning. No matter what her gifts are, she is to submit to her husband.

At this point I would like to qualify what I have just said with two comments.

First, no woman, whatever her gifts, has a right even to contemplate marrying a given individual unless she is prepared to submit in that way. It is a voluntary submission, it is the way that Christ submitted and subordinated Himself. She is to behave in the same way, and unless she is prepared to do so, unless she is convinced that she can submit herself to this man, she should not marry him. If she enters into marriage with any other idea, it is against the will of God, and she is committing sin.

My second comment is this. There are times when it is so obvious that from the standpoint of sheer ability there is no comparison between the husband and the wife. The wife may be an exceptionally able and brilliant woman. The husband may not be without his gifts, but his main gifts are in the matter of personality—he may be an exceptionally nice, friendly, kind, and gracious man. But as regards sheer intellectual ability there is no comparison. It may be that their academic record, being both graduates, had proved this.

The wife may have surpassed her husband academically by a tremendous margin.

There is no question, as to the ability—her grasp of intellectual matters, her understanding, may have become more evident later. She is acting as a helper comparable to him. She has the qualities that he lacks; she is complementing him, she is supplementing him; but the husband is the head.

Authority

Let me show you the importance of realizing and grasping and understanding this teaching.

The failure to understand and to implement this teaching is a major cause of most of the problems in the world today. The basic problem is the problem of authority. The chaos in the world is greatly due to the fact that people in every realm of life have lost all respect for authority, whether between nations or between parts of nations, whether in the public schools, or anywhere else. There is a loss of authority! Even the leaders are ignoring the laws of the land!

And it all really starts in the home and in the marriage relationship. The real breakdown in a nation starts in the home, and in the marriage relationship. The appalling increase in divorce which has taken place is due to primarily one thing, that men and women do not understand this scriptural teaching about marriage and about proper relationships between husbands and wives.

The same lack of understanding is also the explanation of the breakdown in family and in home life, which is again so obvious at the present time. The family has ceased to be the center that it used to be. Even the laws of the land are ridiculous when it comes to judging marriage problems.

The Denver Post reported that a woman was ordered to pay her estranged husband \$4,000 under Colorado's no-fault divorce law, despite the fact that he was at the time awaiting trial for hiring someone to kill her. Under Colorado law, marital misconduct is irrelevant in a divorce, and in this case the wife happened to be earning more than her husband. There is no sense in the land!

The members of the family are always out somewhere, and often out at all hours of the night.

Family life with its wonderful cohesion, this fundamental unit in life, is disappearing. We find here, too, the explanation of the unruliness and the indiscipline among children, and therefore the main explanation of juvenile delinquency. This is easily proven by an

abundance of statistics.

Children who have become delinquents are almost invariably the children of broken homes, of broken marriages. They never have a chance. They have been brought up in an atmosphere of uncertainty, indecision, and conflict, where wife is against husband and husband is against wife, and they become cynics in their tender years.

For example, one 25 year-old woman in Des Moines, Iowa, attempted to set fire to her husband for staying out all night, yet botched the job and actually lit herself up. Insanity!

Children of such parents have no respect for either father or mother, or for anybody or anything. The place where a child should have confidence and security and should be able to look for authority and leadership and guidance has gone away; there is nothing there, and so the poor child becomes a delinquent. He has been brought up in this atmosphere of conflict between father and mother, husband and wife.

There are other aspects of this trend that seem to be more sinister. Is it not a fact that men have been increasingly abrogating their position and retiring out of it, and not doing their duty as husbands and as fathers as the result of sheer laziness and selfishness? Husbands are increasingly leaving the discipline of home-life to the wives, to the mothers. The husbands cannot be bothered; they come home tired from work and ask their wives to keep the children away from them and to answer their questions.

The husband deliberately vacates the position in which God has put him. It is even happening among Christian men. The husband is evacuating his position, and leaving it in his laziness to the wife. Then, on the other side, feminism has led to aggressiveness on the part of the wife, the mother. She is setting herself up as an equal, and undermining the influence of the father in the minds of the children.

The unhappy result is the totally false and wrong approach to marriage and the family. The U.S. has what may more or less be called a matriarchal society, and the man has become regarded merely as the one to provide money, the wage-earner. Thanks to the feminist movement the woman is taking on more and more of this role as well.

The woman, the mother, is portrayed as the cultured person, and the head of the home; and the children look to her. This false unscriptural view of man and woman, and father and mother is typical of a matriarchal society.

The result is, of course, the growth of crime and all the terrible social problems that the U.S. is grappling with. Then, because of the global influence of the U.S., all other

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countries are being perverted by movies and TV shows and in various other ways; this destruction of marriage and the family has spread throughout the entire world.

A matriarchal society with the woman as the head and center of the home is a denial of the biblical teaching, and is a repetition of the old sin of Eve.

Trusting and Serving in God

Making sure that God's government operates in our marriages and families is a major step toward building substance into them. The structure for God's government in the family is given in I Corinthians 11:2-3, as we read earlier. God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man and the husband is head of his wife.

Christ taught His disciples how to administer authority.

Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

They were not to exercise dominion over their neighbor as the gentiles did; they were to serve their neighbors, just as Christ came to serve them. The literal meaning of the word neighbor is, "The one nearest you." Our spouses are the ones nearest us.

Ephesians 5:25 gives specific instructions to husbands:

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

The husband, then, who wants to exercise authority as Christ did, will give himself in service to his wife. He should, symbolically, lay down his life for her.

How? The husband, as the spiritual leader in the home, should always strive to make peace and to create a loving environment in which God's way of life can flourish.

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James 3:17-18 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

However, when things go wrong it is the husband's responsibility to initiate the reconciliation process. Husband and wife should continuously strive to become one in mind and spirit.

Wives, on the other hand, should understand submission; remember Ephesians 5:22 instructs wives to submit to their husbands, "As to the Lord."

The key to submission for wives is to understand that you are serving God, not man. Loyalty and obedience and submission are always to God first.

Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Colossians 3:23-24 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

The term 'submit' in verse 18 suggests an ordering of society in which wives should align themselves with and respect the leadership of their husbands. Paul is not instructing the wives to follow the prevailing cultural patterns of the day but to live as is fitting in the Lord.

Seven times in the nine verses (in Colossians 3:18—4:1) Paul roots his instructions in "the Lord," or an equivalent term, thereby emphasizing the importance of evaluating everything in light of Christ and his teaching.

Submission is not blind obedience. It is a state of being—a reflection of what a woman is in her heart. A submissive woman radiates this attitude to the family.

I Peter 3:1-7 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair,

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wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

The key words are, "Trusted in God," in verse 5. The wives' devotion was and is first and foremost to God, then to Christ, and then to her husband.

Peter writes his letter to his beloved friends whom he admires. His comment about the leadership of the husband and submission of the wife shows that spiritual standing does not obliterate gender and institutional differences between men and women.

Look at verse 7, "As being heirs together of the grace of life," what a powerful, revealing, important truth regarding wives. This phrase, "Being heirs together of the grace of life," is connected with eternal life as fellow-Christians. The husband and wife are equal heirs of the everlasting inheritance. The same "grace of life" is connected with that inheritance that is given to both.

God will not save anyone He cannot rule. The test of character in this life is the development of faith and obedience. God trains women just as much as men in the character-developing process. If a woman submits as Christ has given commandment, then she is trusting in God for protection and deliverance, just as Christ submitted to death on the stake, even though He had not sinned.

Notice Christ's attitude of not deceiving, not insulting, and not threatening.

I Peter 2:21-23 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth;" who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.

If the wife's husband takes advantage of her submission, he will be judged by God, and

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Hebrews 10:31 tells us that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

This does not mean that a wife should never say anything when she is being mistreated. Matthew 18 applies equally to the wife as to the husband.

Matthew 18:15-17 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

If the wife cannot be reconciled to her husband, then she should seek the aid of a second party; in many cases this should be her minister. Nonetheless, if she will submit as Christ has commanded, she may win her husband by her conduct, as we read in 1 Peter 3:1.

Conclusion

Men and women know all about common sense and wisdom and the spirit of companionship, and give and take; and they have always known all about it; but they cannot practice it. Why?

There is only one hope in marriage! Until God is the Authority and husband and wife submit themselves to Him, until they do all things "As to the Lord," and realize that it is the same kind of headship as that of God over Christ and Christ over man, there is no hope.

It is as men and women have continually and increasingly departed from the authority of the Bible that this terrible social blight and problem has become more and more evident. It has become the perverted norm.

I am in no way advocating that marriages go back to the stern, repressive, dictatorial husband and father of past centuries. That is completely wrong and it is worldly; it is pagan.

I know that much of the modern problem is due to the backlash reaction against tyrannical hard-hearted husbands and fathers—the steel oppressor without the velvet. And, it is to be condemned as much as the present dysfunctional marriages and families

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of the feminist era.

We must come back to the inspired written Word of God—back to God and Christ!

Look again at their perfect plan: The man and the woman by his side complementing him, his comparable helper; loving one another, respecting, cherishing, and honoring one another, but never confusing the two individual areas of responsibility. Husbands and wives complement one another.

I Corinthians 11:11-12 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.

May God in His grace enable us not only to see the godly marriage principles, but to submit ourselves to them, and thereby bring honor and glory to the name of God and Christ, "As to the Lord."