

# Husbands and Wives

1 Peter 3:1-7

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Understanding God's pattern for marriage is greatly needed today, especially since we live in a culture that seeks to the two roles that make up this relationship. In addition, many people seek to diminish the significance of the marriage relationship all together. But this is not the first time such an attitude has arisen, for there were some in Jesus' day who also sought to cheapen the marriage and its vows (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:4-12). In this lesson we will consider God's pattern for marriage—the role of the husband and the wife in cooperation with one another. We will begin at the same point Jesus did—*“from the beginning.”*

## Marriage In the Beginning

As Jesus pointed out in Mark 10:6-9, marriage is something that God established in the beginning for all time. To make His point, Jesus quoted from Gen. 1:27; 2:24. He taught that God made them male and female, and that God joined them together in marriage as *“one flesh.”* Since God is involved in the joining of marriage, Jesus said, *“What God has joined together, let not man separate”*: i.e. God created this relationship, let not man cheapen it by separating it as the many of the Jews did in His day and as many people do in our culture today.

Taking our cue from the teachings of Jesus, we would do well to consider the lessons that can be learned from examining the first marriage. In Gen. 2:18 we are told that Man had a need. To fulfill that need, God made woman. Understand that the woman was made because there was no other creature on the earth suitable to fulfill this role. Man was incomplete until woman was made. Likewise, the man who is in a position to be married must understand the value of a wife. There must be a sense of respect toward her, for she is a gift from God. Likewise, wives must respect that they were created to fulfill a very specific and important role. As such, they should hold their responsibility in greatest regard.

When a man and a woman decide to become joined together in marriage, according to Gen. 2:24 the man is to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. At that point, his dependence upon his parents has ceased and he in turn becomes dependent upon his wife and vice versa. If a husband and wife get in a fight, they were not to leave, cleave, and go back to mother. To leave and cleave means to hold onto one's spouse as one would hold on to his own flesh, for they become one flesh. That was God's plan.

The marriage relationship was set in the beginning and, as Jesus pointed out, nothing has changed concerning God's pattern. Though nothing has changed, one of the consequences of sin is that fulfilling the roles of the husband and the wife have become a little more difficult. It was always man's role to provide, but after the fall, according to Gen. 3:17, his job would become much more difficult: i.e. *“In toil you shall eat of it...In the sweat of your face...”* Likewise, it was always the woman's role to be a helper to the husband and to bear children, but according to Gen. 3:16, after the fall that role was made more difficult: i.e. *“I will greatly multiply your sorrow in conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”*

God gave responsibilities to both the man and the women which are needed in order for the marriage relationship to be complete. Because of the curse there are physical consequences that make fulfilling those responsibilities more difficult, but the thing that can ruin a marriage is sin itself, especially pride. Before sin, obedience to God's pattern was good, even pleasurable. However, when pride and lust entered, so did sin and destruction (Gen. 3:6). When those sinful attitudes dwell in the hearts of husbands and wives, then the desire to cast off God's pattern for

the marriage begins to tear people apart. However, when sin is removed from the marriage and people willingly accept God's pattern as they were meant to in the beginning, then the marriage will succeed. Thus, Prov. 3:5-6 applies to marriages as well as everything else in life. *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*

### **The Role of the Husband**

In Eph. 5:25-33 Paul compares the role of the husband to Christ and His relationship to the church. Thus, husbands are commanded to *"love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."* Since the beginning it has been man's responsibility to provide for his own. Men throughout history have misunderstood his role as head of the family to mean that he should get whatever he wants. However, what does the character of Jesus teach us about the attitude husbands should have toward his role? *"Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20:28). That is the attitude that Paul is teaching husbands to have! Notice that the husband's role is not to make sure that the wife is serving him, but that he is providing for his wife.

In Eph. 5:26-27 Paul continues on, teaching husbands to sanctify their wives and to bestow great honor upon them, just as Christ does for His church. Jesus provides for the needs of the church and He does so with the church's best interest in mind. So husbands must do likewise. In vs. 28 Paul says that he who loves his wife loves himself. Husbands, think of the response you get from your wife when you treat her with honor and respect. Is not life better for both of you? Therefore, care for her as if she were a part of your own body. Vs. 29-32, let your relationship be with her as if you are one flesh. According to vs. 33, the end result is mutual respect and honor.

In Col. 3:19 Paul gives the simple instructions for husbands to love their wives and to not be bitter toward them. Sometimes a husband is tempted to be bitter toward his wife if he thinks she is not pulling her own weight. Many times, she do not fulfill her role as she ought to because the husband is not fulfilling his. The solution is to show love without bitterness.

In 1 Pet. 3:7 husbands are instructed to dwell with their wives with understanding. What kind of understanding? Understanding the differences between a woman's needs and a man's. Understanding God's pattern for husbands and wives. Understanding your need to care for her and to cherish her. Understanding the way Christ loves the church. Understanding her difficulties, being sympathetic and caring.

Husbands are also commanded to give honor to wives as to weaker vessels. Many have been confused about this passage, believing that "weaker vessel" refers to physical strength. Though most women are weaker than most men, there are many exceptions. But that is not what is being discussed in the context. In 1 Pet 2:13-3:1, Peter discusses the need to 1. Submit to authorities (2:13-14), 2. Submit to masters, even harsh ones (2:18). 3. Submit to husbands (3:1). What is the discussion? Respect for authority.

As the wife is to submit to or respect the authority of her husband, the husband is to conduct himself with respect in his responsibility toward his wife. The husband is not to abuse his authority. Rather, he must understand that the life of his wife is placed in his hands; therefore he is to care for her, to cherish her, and to protect her. Yes, he has authority, but by that authority he is to imitate Christ by doing only what is the best for his wife.

Finally, husbands are commanded to acknowledge their equality with their wives as fellow heirs in the kingdom. Remember, how we treat our wives affects our relationship with God!

## The Role of the Wife

In Eph. 5:22-24, 33 wives are instructed to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. Observe that Christ gave His life for the church, thus Christians, in turn, give themselves to His service (2 Cor. 5:15). Likewise, husbands give their lives for their wives, thus wives, in turn, give themselves to the service of their husbands as helpers suitable for them. Just as being a Christian is a blessing, so is being a wife! But both come with responsibilities. Therefore, wives are to be subject to their husbands.

In Col. 3:18, as husbands are to love their wives, so wives are to submit to their husband as is fitting to the Lord. Husbands are not to become bitter, but wives are not to give them a reason to be bitter. As he provides for her, so she should seek to help him as much as possible and to care for what he provides.

Peter instructs wives as well as husbands in 1 Pet. 3:1-6. He commands wives to submit to husbands. Some may say, "What if I don't have a very good husband?" Peter says that this command holds true regardless of husband's character. Thus, if a woman has a good husband, then she is to submit to him as to the Lord, showing gratitude for the life that he provides for her. But if a woman has a bad husband, or one that does not believe in the gospel, then she is to seek to convert him through her godly example (love him according to the love of God).

Wives should also emphasize the inward adornment according to vs. 3-4. While it is good to adorn one's self outwardly, many women put more emphasis on outward adornment while their character suffers. Therefore, women must emphasize the adornment of the heart: their attitude, character, and good works. They should seek to be meek and quite, not contentious and outspoken (Prov. 21:9, 19).

In Titus 2:4-5 wives are to be taught to love their husbands. Sometimes it can be difficult to love someone after the initial infatuation has faded. Our culture would call that "falling out of love." But the love that endures is one that must be learned—one that remains even in the midst of disagreements. Thus, loving one's husband is one that requires work, just as keeping the home requires work. These are things that must be learned in order for wives to fulfill their roles in God's pattern.

In Titus 2:5, concerning the term "homemaker" or "keepers at home", "keeper" is defined "ruler." In other words, the wife is one that rules in the home. The home is her domain, thus she must learn to keep the home and to govern it in a way that is honorable. While husbands give their lives to provide the home (as Christ gave His life to provide for the church) the wives are in charge of caring for what has been provided (just as Christians must care for the life that they have been given). Husbands should trust wives in the conduct of household. Wives should give their husbands good reason to trust them with their charge. The rule of wives in the home is to be done with respect to the authority of husband, not taking advantage of your charge, but fulfilling it in a godly way.

Finally, we will consider the worthy woman of Prov. 31. In looking at this description it would be good for us to consider the oft debated question, "Does 'keeper at home' mean it is wrong for wives to make money?" If we look at Prov. 31:16 we see the worthy woman buying field and planting a vineyard with her own hands. In vs. 18 we see that she produces good merchandise. In other words, there is nothing wrong with making money, when it is done with the proper attitude.

However, we should take note of the difference between the worthy woman of Prov. 31 and the modern day "professional woman." The career woman gives her life for her career to the neglect of her husband, children, and home. In Prov. 31:31:15, 21, 27-28, though the worthy woman makes some income, her heart is in her home. Her desire is not for the career, but for the care

of her family. She is diligent, not because she is trying to climb the corporate ladder, but because she is caring for her husband and her children. They are her top priority.

Notice also that in 31:10-12, as a ruler in her home, the worthy woman respects her husband's trust and the authority he gives her in the home. According to 31:13-20 she is industrious, hardworking, and productive, not lazy or idle. In 31:21, 27-28, she looks to the ways of her household. Notice again that her productiveness is for her household. That is the motivation for her labors.

Though she works, her heart is in the home. Many women have pursued careers to the detriment of their marriage, their children, and their home. Understand that there is nothing wrong with women working, but women who do work should never forget their role in God's pattern. Therefore, seek to care for the home and the family first. Let that be your goal, for that is your role.

### **Conclusion**

The role for husbands and wives as defined by God provide mutual honor and respect. As one flesh, they form a symbiotic relationship wherein they provide for each other's needs and complete one another. If the husband seeks to diminish the value of the wife, then he diminishes his own life. Likewise if the wife seeks to fulfill the role of the husband then she is throwing away the kind of life for which God made her. But when both have the humility to submit to God's pattern, then their relationship will be strong, pleasing to one another and pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

*By David Phillips  
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