

The Role of Man and Woman

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Without a doubt, one of the most misunderstood relationships, in the modern era of God's church, is that between man and woman. Numerous theories, explanations and interpretations have been used, to justify the different positions that have been taken on this subject. But, as always, God's word provides a clear understanding of the roles of both man and woman in the marital relationship and how they relate to each other on a personal level. This relationship is very important, since it points to relationships that exist in the family of God. God ordained the marriage relationship for a specific purpose. We must both recognize and be fulfilling this relationship in the proper way, to glean all of the benefits and blessings that God wants men and women to realize, from a right and harmonious relationship.

God created man incomplete! Think about that for just a moment, if man was complete in every way, why didn't God then just populate the planet with men? God is perfect, He does not make mistakes! He could have made man entirely self sufficient, but notice in Genesis 2:18 what God says:

Genesis 2:18

18 And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

God purposefully created the man with the need for a mate, a full and complete partner, an help meet (a helper comparable to him). After He had said this, God then continued to create all of the animals and creatures and allowed Adam to name them. But, in everything that was created, there was not found a helper, or mate for Adam:

Genesis 2:20

20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

In all that God had created up to that point, there was nothing found on earth that could provide for Adam what he was lacking. God then caused a great sleep to fall upon Adam and removed one of his ribs as he slept:

Genesis 2:21

²¹ And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

From this rib that came from Adam, God then created a mate for Adam:

Genesis 2:22

²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

Adam named this mate, that God created for him, woman:

Genesis 2:23

²³ And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

There is much to be gleaned and understood from the above passage. God allowed Adam to name this newly created person, just as he had allowed him to name all of the other creatures that were made to inhabit the earth, why? This signified man's preeminence and his role of leadership and dominion. God could have easily created woman from the dust, just as He had Adam.

Why then did God use a physical part of man, Adam's rib? By taking one of Adam's ribs, God demonstrated to him in a physical way that he was lacking something. By creating the woman from the rib, it also showed that the woman belonged with the man; she was part of him and came from him. Now, the man had to join with the woman in a harmonious relationship to be complete, the two make one:

Genesis 2:24

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

The man and woman were more acceptable to each other, since they were created from the same bones and flesh. They were attracted to each other and had a natural desire and affection for each other. Notice what it says in the passage above. ***Read it again!*** A man is to ***cleave*** unto his wife and ***they*** are to become as ***one***. To be as one flesh, means that the man and woman have to be so close as to be the same as one body! Paul expounds on this in his epistle to the Ephesian church:

Ephesians 5:28

²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

A man is to love his wife just as part of his own body! *Can you grasp and understand that!* It is of **vital** importance that we fully and completely understand the meaning and importance of these relationships. Paul gives us even more insight:

Ephesians 5:22-24

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 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. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Here Paul tells us that wives should submit to their husbands, just as they would to Christ. However, this does not give a husband license to dominate his wife and mistreat, enslave, or abuse her! ***Would Christ treat the church in that manner? Absolutely not! Unthinkable!!*** Notice this verse:

Ephesians 5:25

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

Jesus Christ loved the church so much, that he was willing to give up his own life for it. This scripture is very plain in meaning! Men are to love their wives in the same way. There is no ambiguity here!!

Now Paul reveals an amazing truth:

Ephesians 5:28-30

²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

Husbands are to love, nourish and cherish their wives, just as Christ loves, nourishes and cherishes the church. ***Why? Read verse 30 again! We are members of His (Christ's) body, we are of His flesh and His bones!! Incredible!!*** Do you see the duality here? Christ loves the church as part of His own body! Husbands are to treat their wives in the same manner! Paul makes his meaning perfectly clear in the next two scriptures:

Ephesians 5:31-32

³¹ "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." (Not two separate identities, each going their own way, but unified.) ³² This is a great mystery, (Why is it a mystery? because you have to put the understanding of these relationships together to get the meaning.) but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Paul repeats the scripture from Genesis 2:24 concerning the man and woman becoming one flesh and then reveals an incredible, ***awesome*** truth! These principles also apply to the relationship between Christ and the church! The marriage relationship between man and woman, is a type of the relationship between Christ and the church! ***Now we begin to see why it is so important that we get this right!!!***

The husband serves as a type of Christ in the marriage relationship; he is the spiritual head and leader of the family. The wife serves as a type of the church, she is in submission (willingly) to the husband (just as we are to Christ) and they love and support each other:

Ephesians 5:33

³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Paul admonishes husbands over and over to love their wives as themselves, as their own bodies. The husband must learn to lead in love, not abusing his authority and position as the spiritual head of the family. In the same manner, the wife is to be submissive to the husband as he leads in a ***Christ-like manner.***

Peter also gave instruction on the marital relationship:

1 Peter 3:7

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.

Notice Peter says husbands should dwell with them (wives) according to knowledge. Husbands have been given instruction through scripture (as we have examined) in the proper treatment of their wives. Husbands are to honor and respect their wives, recognizing and appreciating their special and unique attributes. The husband is to recognize that the wife is not as strong in stature, or physical strength, but also that in no way does that diminish her importance, or potential. The husband and wife both, must realize that each one is an equal heir in God's kingdom and will receive eternal life, being born into the kingdom of God as a glorified spirit being. It is so important that these roles be fulfilled properly that the prayers of both husband and wife can be hindered from reaching God, if they are not each fulfilling their roles properly!

The role of the wife is every bit as important as the husband. If the husband is overbearing and abuses his authority, then the wife is prevented from fulfilling her proper role and the relationship suffers. Likewise, there are women who are overbearing, overassertive and take responsibilities upon themselves that God ever intended for them. They refuse to let the husband fulfill his role as leader and spiritual head of the family. Again, the relationship suffers when the proper roles are not maintained. The important and vital lessons that God wants us to learn from a proper marriage relationship will never be realized. ***What a tragedy!!!***

If these roles are not being properly fulfilled in your marriage, you are in opposition to the ***almighty, everlasting, GOD!!***

Now another stunning truth! Read Christ's own words regarding the relationship between Himself and the Father:

John 10:30

30 I and My Father are one."

John 17:11

11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

John 17:21

²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Do you see the importance here!!! Once again the duality aspect of two becoming one is revealed, only this time Christ is referring to the relationship He has with His Father!!! An all knowing, compassionate, loving, God has created and ordained relationships for us, during this lifetime, that are patterned after relationships that exist on the God-plane!!! We ***must learn now*** and get this right to receive the full benefit that God wants for us to experience!!

Yes, God ordained these relationships from the beginning and He expects us to obey Him!!! Men must accept their role and learn now, in this life, to be leaders. Men must lead with love, compassion and wisdom. When the time comes for making a decision, the man must be able to think clearly, weigh all the deciding factors and then have the strength and conviction to follow through and stand by his decision. The woman has a very important supportive role, men and women do not think exactly alike. Women can provide valuable input, insight and bring to light important details that may have not been considered before. That is ***precisely*** one of the ways that ***God*** intended for woman to be a help meet to the man!!

The woman has a very important role in the rearing of children. Just as the church supports, cares for and nurtures new babes in Christ, the woman also supports, cares for and nurtures the children that are produced in a marriage. Since the woman is the primary caregiver, she has a very powerful influence in shaping the children as they grow. It is a very important and huge responsibility that has been given to her by God! Men and women should recognize and appreciate the special roles and responsibilities they have each been given by God, supporting, encouraging and helping each other every step of the way. In Acts 18, we find a description of a husband and wife working together in harmony and glorifying God in their actions:

Acts 18:24-26

²⁴ Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

God clearly blessed Aquila and Priscilla with knowledge and understanding and because of the harmonious relationship they shared, they were able to teach others God's way of life in greater detail. ***What a blessing and how pleasing to God!!!***

In Proverbs 31, there is a description of the virtuous woman:

Proverbs 31:10-31

10 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.

11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain.

12 She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.

13 She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands.

14 She is like the merchant ships, She brings her food from afar.

15 She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants.

16 She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard.

17 She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms.

18 She perceives that her merchandise is good, And her lamp does not go out by night.

19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle.

20 She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of snow for her household, For all her household is clothed with scarlet.

22 She makes tapestry for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land.

24 She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies sashes for the merchants.

25 Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come.

26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness.

27 She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her:

29 "Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all."

30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates.

God inspired this to be placed into the bible for a reason. It is a beautiful description and a list of very noble attributes, things which a person should certainly aspire to achieve. But it is not a litmus test, or a yardstick by which someone's worth, or value should be measured, as has been done. There are many scriptures in the bible which give us examples of attributes we should all strive for. We are all working towards becoming the people that God would have us to be. This is also a description of a woman that is clearly in love and the household is being lead by a husband who understands his role. This woman is in a happy and harmonious relationship and it shows in all the things she does and in how she acts and in how she treats others.

The relationships between men and women can be very complex and each relationship has its own set of unique challenges. Relationships take involvement, maintenance and comittment, in order for them to work properly and for us to realize all that God wants us to glean from them. God created man and woman to dwell together; we are all responsible before God, to conduct our relationships in the way that He has shown us. When two people are married, they make a covenant with each other and with God. They are bound by that covenant to remain in a relationship and to conduct themselves according to the guidelines and examples God has provided.

Children naturally look to their parents as role models and it is very important that they are exposed to the proper roles of a husband and wife in marriage, as they are growing up. It is an important part of teaching them of the knowledge of God and his way of life. Children begin to shape their thoughts and attitudes from a young age and the examples they see as they grow, will set the pattern for how they interact in their own relationships in the future. You may not realize it, but people from outside the immediate family also watch and learn from the way husbands and wives treat each other and whether, or not, you honor and value each other and your marriage.

God intended and wants us to learn and reap all the benefits we can from our relationships. He created man and woman to be together in life and to become as one, in perfect harmony, with mutual love, respect and honor for each other. To cherish each other, to appreciate each others differences and to use those differences to their advantage. Everything God does, has a reason and a purpose. It us up to each of us, individually, to conduct ourselves properly and in a way acceptable to Almighty God in our relationships, the way He has shown us, faithfully before Him, with deep appreciation for what He has given us:

Colossians 3:15-19

¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. ¹⁸ Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

(All scriptural references cited from the New King James Edition of the Holy Bible)