

18 Proclaiming the Excellencies of Christ in Marriage Life

1 Peter 2:9, 12; 3:1-7

1 Peter 3:1-7

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. Do not let your adorning be external--the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear-- but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

I Marriage in a hostile society

A Christian wives living with unbelieving husbands

- 1 Husbands who do not obey/believe the word (1 Pet. 3:1)
- 2 Christian wives win their husbands not through their words but through their conduct.
- 3 Respectful conduct – a means of evangelism (1 Pet. 3:2)
Every wife...wants her husband to appreciate how much she loves him, and she yearns to feel more love from him. What we try to share is that the best way to love a husband is to show him respect in ways that are meaningful to him. Such respect lets him feel his wife's love for him and ignites in him feelings of love for his wife. (*Love and Respect*, Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, p. 43)
- 4 Being subject to their own husbands (1 Pet. 3:1,5; Eph. 5:22; Titus 2:5)
When a woman becomes a believer before her husband problems may occur. A woman becomes a Christian and all of a sudden she may feel superior to her husband. She feels like now that she knows what the Bible teaches and that she belongs to God, she knows so much more than he does, how can he be the leader in the family? Not only that, she keeps meeting these wonderful men at church who are fine outstanding Christians and she becomes envious of them and she becomes indifferent to her own husband and much more attracted to other men who love Christ because she sees in that the potential for such a wonderful life. This can lead to great serious problems.
(Message by John MacArthur www.gty.org)
- 5 Winning the husband for Christ through the wife's conduct not by preaching (1 Pet. 3:1; 1 Cor. 7:14)
- 6 Taking care of inward beauty more than outward beauty
Almost every society has been obsessed with women's outward appearance. It was at that time and it still is today. Take time to take care of your inward beauty. Take time to spend with the Lord, to love the Lord, to be right with the Lord. When you are inwardly beautiful you are outwardly beautiful. Makeup cannot change an ugly disposition. (John MacArthur)

B Husbands living with their wives with understanding

- 1 Endeavouring to understand the needs of their wives
- 2 Showing honour to their wives
- 3 Realizing their wife is a joint-heir with them of the grace of life
- 4 Having a proper and godly relationship with their wife so that their prayers are not hindered.

II The Bible's View of Marriage

A Both male and female are image bearers of God - equal but different

The first mention of gender in the Bible occurs with the very first mention of humanity itself. "In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26). This means that our maleness and our femaleness is not incidental to our humanness but constitutes its very essence. God does not make us into a generic humanity that is later differentiated; rather from the start we are male or

female. Every cell in our body is stamped as XX or XY. This means that I cannot understand myself if I try to ignore the way God has designed me or if I despise the gifts he may have given me to help me fulfill my calling.... Genesis shows us that men and women were created with absolute equality. Both are equally made in the image of God, equally blessed, and equally given “dominion” over the earth. This means that men and women together, in full participation, must carry out God’s mandate to build civilization and culture. (*The Meaning of Marriage*, Timothy and Kathy Keller, pp. 172-173)

B Both proclaim the excellencies of God in different ways

C Having different roles but a unity of purpose (Gen. 2:18)

Just as physical reproduction requires the cooperative work of husband and wife, each playing a different role but each necessary and both working together as a unit, so in all other areas the pattern is to be varying responsibilities but unity of purpose. The players on an athletic team do not all do the same tasks, but they do have the same objective. Thus, the husband and wife do not perform identical roles, but they work toward a common objective as a team commissioned by God. (*The Marriage You’ve Always Wanted*, Gary Chapman, p. 77-78)

III The Trinity – a Pattern for the relationship between wife and husband– Phil. 2:5-11

A The Son’s sacrificial submission to the Father

In Philippians 2:5-11, we have one of the earliest hymns to Jesus sung by the church, which celebrates that although Jesus was equal with God he emptied himself of his glory and took on the role of a servant. Jesus shed his divine privileges without becoming any less divine and he took on the most submissive role – that of a servant who dies in his master’s service. In this passage we see taught both the essential equality of the First and Second Persons of the Godhead, and yet the voluntary submission of the Son to the Father to secure our salvation. Let me emphasize that Jesus’ willing acceptance of this role was wholly voluntary, a gift to his Father. I [Kathy Keller] discovered here that my submission in marriage was a gift I offered, not a duty coerced from me....I asked myself if it was not an assault on the dignity and divinity (but rather led to the greater glory) of the Second Person of the Godhead to submit himself, and assume the role of a servant, then how could it possibly injure me to be asked to play out the “Jesus role” in my marriage? (Keller, p. 174-175)

B The “Dance of the Trinity”

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul says directly what is implied in Philippians 2 – namely, that the relationship of the Father and the Son is a pattern for the relationship of husband to wife. The Son submits to the Father’s headship with free, voluntary, and joyful eagerness, not out of coercion or inferiority. The Father’s headship is acknowledged in reciprocal delight, respect, and love. There is no inequality of ability or dignity. We are differently gendered to reflect this life within the Trinity. Male and female are invited to mirror and reflect the “dance” of the Trinity, loving, self-sacrificing authority and loving, courageous submission. The Son takes a subordinate role, and in that movement he shows not his weakness but his greatness. This is one of the reasons why Paul can say that the marriage “mystery” gives us insight into the very heart of God in the work of our salvation (Eph. 5:32). (Keller, p. 176)

IV The Son’s Sacrificial Authority – John 13:12-16

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master... John 13:12-16

A Jesus’ relationship with his disciples – sacrificial authority

Jesus demonstrated in the most dramatic way that authority and leadership mean that you become the servant, you die to self in order to love and serve the Other. Jesus redefined all authority as servant authority. Any exercise of power can only be done in service to the Other, not to please oneself. ...Those tasked with leadership must be the slaves of all, following their master, who “did not come to be served but to serve (Matt. 20:28)...” -(Keller, p. 177-178)

V Husbands as self-sacrificing leaders – 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23,25

A Learning to be a proper “head”.

- 1 It does not mean the man is more valuable than the woman
- 2 It does not mean that the man is to be a dictator, making independent decisions and telling his wife what to do.

B Commanded to love with self-sacrificing love – Eph. 5:25

This means we must say to ourselves something like this: “Well, when Jesus looked down from the cross, he didn’t think, ‘I am giving myself to you because you are so attractive to me.’ No, he was in agony, and he looked down at us – denying him, abandoning him, and betraying him – and in the greatest act of love in history, he stayed...He loved us, not because we were lovely to him, but to make us lovely. That is why I am going to love my spouse.” Speak to your heart like that, and then fulfill the promises you made on your wedding day. (Keller, p. 109)

VI Submitting to our gender roles

Both women and men get to “play the Jesus role” in marriage. For husbands it is Jesus in his sacrificial authority, for wives it is Jesus in his sacrificial submission. By accepting our gender roles, and operating within them, we are able to demonstrate to the world concepts that are so counter intuitive as to be completely unintelligible unless they are lived out by men and women in Christian marriages. (Keller, p. 179)

Women are not inferior in character. They are not inferior in intelligence. They are not inferior in virtue. They are not inferior in spirituality. They are not inferior in giftedness. They have been simply given a role that puts them in the place of submission to a headship which is residing in their husband.

Suggested Reading:

The Meaning of Marriage by Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller

Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires, The Respect He Desperately Needs by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

The Marriage You’ve Always Wanted by Dr. Gary Chapman

The Five Love Languages by Dr. Gary Chapman

For Men Only: A Straight forward Guide to the Inner lives of Women by Shaunti and Jeff Feldhahn

For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men by Shaunti and Jeff Feldhahn