

# MARRIAGE TUNE UP

## Biblical Roles in Marriage

### Lesson #3

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God has designed certain roles for the husband and wife in marriage. Do you know what God says is your role? Many do not. In fact, most people go into marriage not even thinking about the roles and responsibilities given to them by God which they are to fulfill towards their mate. They let chance, trial and error, and personality dictate to them their marriage roles. Every husband and every wife are commanded by God to love their spouse in a certain way and to fulfill certain responsibilities. It is only when both the husband and wife are committed to obey God's will for them in the marriage relationship that they can experience the fulness of God's blessing. This lesson is designed to show you what the Bible says is your role and responsibility towards your spouse.

#### I. PRIMARY NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS ADDRESSING THE ROLES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

##### A. Eph. 5:22-33

**Background:** In **Ephesians 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15** Paul exhorted his readers to walk (or live) as Christians. He then tells them in **Eph. 5:18** to be filled with the Spirit. Paul explains that the Spirit filled life will manifest itself in a preoccupation of godly thoughts, praises, and actions (**Eph. 5:19-21**). He then addresses the marriage relationship between husband and wife in **Eph. 5:22-33** and says:

**22** Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. **24** But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; **26** that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **27** that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. **28** So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; **29** for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, **30** because we are members of His body. **31** For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. **32** This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. **33** Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.

1. Many women in our society feel that submission is a bad thing. Some feel it is abusive. What instructions given above to husbands might be considered abusive to wives?
2. If submission is wrong, bad, or abusive, what implications does this have to submitting to government, submitting to employers, Christ submitting to the Father? Who has to submit?

**B. Col. 3:18-19**

**Background:** Colossae was a small town near the two neighboring and more prosperous towns of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Paul had never preached at Colossae (2:1). The gospel was probably first presented to them by Epaphras, a convert of Paul and a native of Colossae (4:12). The Colossian letter is a response from the Apostle Paul to the Church at Colossae. Paul received a report from someone who had visited the Colossian church and was concerned about some of their teachings and practices. One of the subjects Paul addresses is marriage relationships (Col. 3:18-19).

**18** Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them.

1. One of the fears women have is that if they submit to their husband, their husband will ask them to defile their conscience or do something the Lord forbids. What is the criteria given in vs. 18 for a wife's submission to her husband? Give some examples.
2. Out of all the things Paul could have instructed husbands not to be, why do you think that he asked them to not be embittered against their wives? What does it mean to be embittered and what are some reasons that might tempt husbands to be embittered?

**C. I Pet. 3:1-7**

**Background:** In I Peter 1, Peter reminds his readers of their past, present, and future salvation and how to walk in light of it. In ch. 2 & 3 he discusses how to live the Christian life under trial. Peter explains that the Christian life includes submission to Government, submission to masters, and submission of wives to husbands. Wives are told how to live with husbands that are trials and husbands are told how not to be a trial to their wives.

1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 And let not your adornment be merely external – braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. 6 Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. 7 You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

1. What does the phrase “in the same way” refer to? (See 2:13, 18, 21-24)

2. Was Abraham acting in faith when he lied about the identity of his wife on two separate occasions, said Sarah was his sister, and let another man take Sarah as a wife?
3. What did Abraham tell Sarah would happen to him if Pharaoh and later Abimelech found out she was his wife? (**Gen. 12:12; 20:11**)
4. Why is Sarah held up as the model of submission? Was it because she thought Abraham's plan was a good idea or was she willing to submit to Abraham's plan for another reason?

## II. THE LOVE THAT SUSTAINS A MARRIAGE

Paul speaking to the Corinthians about spiritual gifts explains that they need to be exercised in love. He then gives a rather lengthy definition of love and says this is **I Cor. 13:4-7**:

**4** Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, **5** does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, **6** does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; **7** bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. **8** Love never fails.

- A. How many feelings are mentioned in the definition of love given by Paul above? Does this mean you have to be unemotional to love someone? How do emotions fit into biblical love?
- B. Who commands us to love one another? Why should we obey the command to love?
- C. When we put conditions on our love, what does that reveal?

## III. WHAT IS SUBMISSION?

When Paul wrote to the Philippians they were having problems being united. Paul addresses this problem and uses Jesus as the ultimate example of a humble person. In **Phil. 2:5-8** Jesus is put forth as an example of having the right attitude:

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, **6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- A. When a marriage is having problems people often get bitter, angry, and withdraw from one another. What do we learn from the text above is the cure for disunity?
  
- B. How can Jesus example help us to have better marriages when we feel things are unfair, wrong, and hurtful?

**IV. ROLES FROM THREE KEY TEXTS SUMMARIZED**

Examine the chart below. If you are a husband, look at all the things God requires of you. If you are a wife, look what God requires of you.

<b>Text</b>	<b>Husband's Responsibility</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Wife's Responsibility</b>
Eph. 5:25 Col. 3:19	Husbands, love your wives (command)	Eph. 5:22 Col. 3:18 I Pet. 3:1, 5	Wives, be subject (command)
Eph. 5:23	Love her by leading her	Eph. 5:22 Col. 3:18	Be subject as unto the Lord and as fitting in the Lord
Eph. 5:25	Love her by giving yourself up for her	Eph. 5:23	Be subject to your husband's leadership
Eph. 5:25	Love her by sanctifying her	Eph. 5:24	Wives, be subject in everything
Eph. 5:26	Love her by teaching her the Bible	Eph. 5:33 I Pet. 3:2	Wives, be subject to your husband by respecting your husband
Eph. 5:27	Love her by encouraging her to be godly	I Pet. 3:1	Be a godly example for your husband
Eph. 5:27	Love her by helping her be without flaw	I Pet. 3:1	Don't use words but actions to witness to your disobedient husband
Eph. 5:27	Love her by helping her be holy	I Pet. 3:2	Be chaste in your behavior
Eph. 5:27	Love her by helping her be blameless	I Pet. 3:3-4	As a <b>first priority</b> seek to look good for your husband first by working on your godly character (command)
Eph. 5:28-29	Love her like you do your own self	I Pet. 3:3-4	As a <b>secondary priority</b> seek to look good for your husband externally
Eph. 5:29	Love her by nourishing her	I Pet. 3:4	Be a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God
Eph. 5:29	Love her by cherishing her		
Col. 3:19	Love her by not being embittered against her		
I Pet. 3:7	Love her by being understanding		

<b>Text</b>	<b>Husband's Responsibility</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Wife's Responsibility</b>
I Pet. 3:7	Love her by treating her as a weaker vessel		
I Pet. 3:7	Love her by granting her honor as a fellow heir in the grace of life		
I Pet. 3:7	Love her so your prayers may not be hindered		

- A. What is the main reason/motivation for fulfilling your role in marriage?
- B. What does it mean to be subject or submissive to someone?
- C. What does submission not mean?
- D. Should wives do anything their husbands ask them to do? When is it appropriate for a wife not to submit?
- E. What does it mean to love your spouse?
- F. What is the primary reason why we love our spouse?
- G. What does being the leader mean and not mean?
- H. How can a husband sanctify, cleanse, make his wife blameless, flawless, etc.?
- I. Why is loving your wife the same thing as loving yourself?
- J. What does respecting your husband involve?
- K. How are wives to save disobedient husbands?
- L. Where should the wife focus most of her beautifying efforts? Why?
- M. What does it mean to live with your wife in an "understanding way?"

- N. How can a husband grant his wife honor?
  
- O. If one spouse fails to fulfill his or her role, does that give the other spouse the right to not fulfill his or her role? Why?
  
- P. What if the wife is a natural leader, should the husband let her lead? If not, then how can a relationship like this work?
  
- Q. What if the wife wishes her husband would lead but he isn't? What should she do?
  
- R. Does leading mean that the husband has to do everything and make every decision? Can he delegate?
  
- S. Why would Christian couples want to fulfill their God given roles?

**V. HOME WORK – GO ON A DATE WITH YOUR SPOUSE**

- A. Talk about your roles in your marriage and whether or not your roles are in line with God's Word.
  - 1. Is the wife being submissive?
  - 2. Is the husband a servant leader?
  - 3. Is the husband a spiritual leader?
  - 4. Is the wife making it easy for the husband to lead?
  
- B. Discuss areas you think you should work on. Try to come up with a plan for working together to encourage each other.
  
- C. During the week, whenever you talk or eat together, tell your spouse at least one thing you appreciate about them and why you appreciate that quality.
  
- D. Make an effort to surprise your spouse with encouraging notes, flowers, telephone calls, emails, a special date, small gift, or anything that tells them you are thinking of them and appreciate them. Try to make this a habit.