

## The Divine Pattern for Marriage, Part 4 *The Role of the Husband*

### Introduction

Field Marshall Montgomery once said to his young troops, "Gentlemen, don't even think of marriage until you have mastered the warfare." Why is marriage potential warfare? Why is it so difficult to have a meaningful relationship with someone? The most meaningful relationship is that which occurs between a man and a woman in a marriage, yet fulfillment is elusive. Having a meaningful, lasting relating relationship that gets better, richer, and more fulfilling is rare. In fact, whenever we see marriage portrayed, it's usually depicted as a discontented, bitter relationship ending in separation or divorce. There are reasons for that.

### A. The Curse of God

#### 1. Marriage before the curse (Gen. 2:18-25; cf. 1:27-28)

##### a. Authority and submission

In Genesis 2 God says, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him [or a "suitable helper"]... And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help fit for him" (vv. 18, 20). And in verse 21-22 God provides a suitable helper to aid Adam as he rules the pure and undefiled world of creation. Notice that from the beginning, God designed someone to be in charge and someone to help; someone to be in authority and someone to be submissive; someone to be the leader and someone to be the follower; someone to take care of the provisions and someone to be provided for. The man had the role of leadership, and the woman had the role of the follower. The man protected, provided, preserved, and cared for the woman. She was a fitting, or suitable, helper for him.

##### b. Unity

Adam meets his wife in verse 23 and says, "*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*" The chapter continues, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed*" (vv. 24-25) Here was a perfect relationship. Adam saw Eve as one with him in every sense---that was God's design. He was the leader, and she was to follow his lead; he had the responsibility for her, and she was under his responsibility. The woman's submissiveness was willing, and the man's provision was willing. There was no animosity---no struggle or fighting---nothing but a perfectly glorious union. That union is also illustrated in a brief account in 1:27-28, where they are described as being fruitful and multiplying, filling the earth, subduing it, and having dominion together as co-regents. That doesn't deny the authority and submission principle; it just shows that they existed in oneness.

- **Four Reasons for Marriage**

1. To propagate children (Gen. 1:28)
2. To eliminate solitude (Gen. 2:18)
3. To prevent immorality (1 Cor. 7:2)
4. To provide enjoyment (Heb. 13:4; Gen. 26:8)

2. Marriage after the curse (Gen. 3:16)

God made marriage a beautiful relationship: the woman was to be the helper, supporting the man, and the man was to be the head, loving the woman. The woman's submission was willing, the man's love dominated his actions, and their union was beautiful---but something terrible happened in Genesis 3.

The serpent, by-passing the leadership of the man, went straight to the woman, who was by nature the follower (because he knew she would give him a better audience), and enticed her to do the one thing God told her not to do: eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She took the fruit, ate it and gave it to her husband. Here we see a role reversal. The woman usurped the leadership of the man, and he became a follower. God's design for marriage was twisted---and marriage has been defiled ever since. If you want to show why marriage is tough, it's because there has been since that act, a role reversal.

In Genesis 3:16-19 God gives a curse to the man and woman because of their sin. We find that the most basic elements of human life are involved.

- a. The elements of the curse

- 1) Pain childbearing (3:16a)

The wonderful reality and the glorious anticipation, joy, and hope of having a child would be somewhat overshadowed by the anguish of childbirth.

- 2) Strife in marriage (3:16b)

There would be a problem in marriage caused by the man's ruling over the women oppressively and the woman's seeking to rule over the man.

- 3) Work (3:17-19)

Man would need to work to earn a living and provide for his family.

- 4) Death (2:17)

God had said to Adam, "*For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*"

Pain in childbirth, problems in the home, difficulty in getting food, and death are all a result of the sin in the Garden. When Adam sinned, his death and his sin “passed upon all men (Rom. 5:12). The human race was cursed.

Few in our society will deny there is pain in childbirth or that it is difficult for a man to earn a living and provide for his family. But people don’t want to admit that one reason there is conflict in marriage is the reversal of roles that started with the original sin.

b. The effects of the curse

If you want to know why we have women’s liberation movements, it’s partly because the element of the curse that says women will seek to rule over men is still in effect. Male oppression and male chauvinism are evident because that part of the curse is also in effect. Women’s liberation and male chauvinism are simply manifestations of depravity, the Fall of man, and the curse.

• ***How to Have a Marriage That Works***

Two things are needed if you’re going to have a marriage that works.

1. A woman characterized by submission.

A woman must go back to that place of beautiful submission she knew before the Fall.

2. A man is characterized by sacrificial love.

A man must go back to the place where his commitment is to love the woman and do for her everything he would do for himself---as he did before the Fall.

Do you want to know why we have problems in marriage? Because marriage is cursed to begin with. Depravity manifests itself in two sinful people---in the woman as she seeks to overrule the man, and in the man as he crushes the woman. Husbands who love their wives don’t do so because it’s the natural thing to do. It’s natural to love ourselves---to be self-consumed and self-absorbed. And as long as a man is like that, he can’t give himself in love to someone else.

Men fulfill their part of the curse too. Women have been abused. Men in our society aren’t any different from those of the past; they suppressed women, crush them down, and make them into sex objects. As a result, we have a proliferation of pornography, and magazines, movies, and advertising often portray women as creatures with no function other than that of fulfilling the sexual desires of men. That perspective is wrong---it makes woman into something far less than God ever intended her to be.

Men have oppressed women, and women have sought to override the bounds of their God-given design. We can’t expect anything different because that’s the legacy of sin. However, it doesn’t have to be that way. It is possible to have a marriage relationship where the wife is lifted up, exalted, and allowed to be all that

God intended her to and where the husband knows how to invest his life in lovingly providing for her. Such a co-regency fulfills the plan that God intended.

## **B. The Corruption of Satan**

It's bad enough that marriage is cursed, but that isn't all. Satan tries to destroy marriages also. If we add Satan's influence to the initial curse, we're going to have major problems. In Genesis, we find that as soon as sin entered the world, Satan began to attack marriage. He tried to dissolve and crush marriage as best he could because he knew it was the only hope of right human relationships. He wanted to devastate the world by destroying relationships at their most important level --- in the home. So immediately after the Fall in Genesis 3, Satan tries to corrupt marriage in the following ways.

1. Polygamy (Gen. 4:19, 23).
2. Evil sexual thoughts and words (Gen. 9:22).
3. Adultery (Gen. 16:1-3).
4. Homosexuality (Gen. 19:4-11)
5. Fornication and rape (Gen. 34:1-2).
6. Incest (Gen. 38:13-18).
7. Prostitution (Gen. 38:24).
8. Seduction (Gen. 39:7-12).

Do you to know why marriage is tough? Do you want to know why there are so many divorces, so many miserable people, and so many unhappy relationships? It all started when women took the place of man and acted independently. When the man fell submissively to the women in sin, God locked marriage in chains. And since that time, women by nature desire to rule men, and men tend to despotically dominate women. Add to that the impulses of polygamy, evil thoughts and words, adultery, homosexuality, fornication, rape, unequally yoked relationships (Gen. 34), incest, prostitution, and seduction, and you'll have trouble trying to have a successful marriage.

## **C. The Confusion of Society**

If the elements of the curse and the corruptions of Satan aren't enough to make marriage difficult, add to them a society that extols all of Satan's corruptions as virtuous. It's tough living a godly life in this evil and perverse generation. The only people who can are those who: (1) know the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1-3) and (2) are filled with His Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Apart from that, a person has no more hope of making a marriage work the way of God designed it than of finding a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. It will never happen.

At the heart of all meaningful relationships is marriage. The curse hit us at the base of our most-needed relationship: *"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone"* (Gen 2:18). Man desperately needs a helper---someone with whom he can fulfill his deep drives and physical needs, and someone who can be his friend. Satan attacks

the core of man's greatest need and makes it virtually impossible for him to build that needed relationship on his own. Then, along comes the sick world, spawned by Satan himself, and tells him that if he really wants to live it up, he would have an affair here and there, swap wives, be a swinger or a homosexual and be proud of it. The confusion gets worse and worse, and meaningful relationships become impossible.

- ***Are You Buying the World's Fantasy on God's Reality?***

Our society denies reality and extols fantasy. Think about the songs of our culture. They are about affairs, wild living, the perfect girl, and the perfect man, promising that the perfect relationship will make everything turn out the way we thought it should be. Singers promote such ideas such as, "I've found the beautiful face, the attractive body, the wonderful personality; I'm going to finally have a relationship with no boredom, no unfaithfulness, no breakup, no pain, no loneliness, no leaving,

no having to start all over again---and it's going to be that way until we die." That's all a dream. Worldly people are looking for a special relationship, but there's no way they are going to find one. So, sadly, our world lives with illusions and fantasies.

One fantasy is that if you really want to live it up, you've got to have super sex---which, in the world's view, is with a man or women you're not married to. The fantasy of super sex is on the screen, in books, in magazines, in records---it's everywhere. There's another fantasy that someday "that perfect person" or "that wonderful relationship" will come and be so perfect that nothing could ever compare with it.

It's sad that our society lives with those fantasies, because they don't realize that the only place they're ever going to find reality is in the Word of God, by knowing Jesus Christ, by being filled with His Spirit, and by letting a relationship be what only God can make it. The fantasy about "that perfect someone" outside marriage will never happen. and all that talk about real sex, real fun, real living, and "doing your own thing" being outside your marriage is a lie. But because people in the world aren't willing to listen to God they're not going to know the answers. The illusions are in the world, but the reality is in the Word of God.

Ephesians 5:22-33 is the greatest treatise on marriage ever written. Here we see marriage as it was before the Fall, where a wife submitted lovingly to her husband's care, protection, and leadership, and where a husband lovingly and sacrificially gave himself to meet every need his wife, whom he lifted up and exalted with all his heart. Now, if we're going to see that kind of relationship in our marriages, Christ must be at our center, and the Spirit of God must pervade us. In other words, once a person is "in Christ" (Eph. 1-3) and "filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) it becomes possible for a wife to submit to her husband and a husband to love his wife. The Christian marriage as God designed it and as Paul discusses it in Ephesians 5 is a reverse of the Fall. So the ultimate tragedy, then, is conflict in a Christian marriage, because it denies all the potential that God has placed there. If you are a believer, you have all the resources necessary to make your

relationship all that God intended marriage to be before the Fall---at least as close as we can get to it.

## Review

### I. The Duty of the Wife (vv. 22-24)

## Lesson

### II. The Duty of the Husband (vv. 25-33)

Men, we are to love our wives. And according to verse 21 (“submitting yourselves one to another”), we submit to our wives by loving them. Keep in mind that our submission is mutual submission. The tendency of the man is to dominate the woman, to be chauvinistic, to be macho---and our society exalts that image. But that attitude is depraved and nothing more than a manifestation of human sinfulness.

Now the word Paul uses here for “love” is the Greek word *αγαπε*---the strongest, most intimate, far-reaching, comprehensive, fulfilling term for love. Yes, there is authority in a marriage. Yes, the husband is the head, and the wife is the one who follows. But verse 25 doesn’t say, “Husbands, rule your wives,” or, “Husbands, order your wives around,” or, “Husbands, subject your wives,” or, “Husbands, command your wives, exercise authority over them, and dominate them.” Paul says, “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church*” (v. 25, emphasis added). How are we to love our wives?

#### A. The Manner of Love (v. 25-31).

Romans 5:8 says, “*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners [as well as enemies, v. 10], Christ died for us.*” Christ gave the greatest gift for the most unworthy people---the contrast is incredible. He is absolutely holy and righteous, untainted and unspotted. He is without flaw. Yet this absolutely perfect One made the absolutely ultimate sacrifice for the worst sinners. That is how Christ love the church.

- ***That’s One***

There’s a story about a newly wed couple, riding in a horse-drawn carriage, headed for their honeymoon. Suddenly the horse bolted, and the man said to the horse, “That’s one!” They went a little farther, and the horse bolted again. The man said, “That’s two!” A little farther the horse bolted again. The man said, “That’s three!” He turned around, took out a gun, and shot the horse. Shocked at what she had just witnessed, the new wife exclaimed, “What have you done? What made you do that? The man replied, “That’s one!”

Some people approach marriage on a one-two –three basis. If God gave us only three chances, we’d all be in hell. An absolutely holy, righteous God made the greatest, most magnanimous sacrifice for the vilest of all people. Husbands, don’t tell me about your wife’s problems. You’re not as far removed from your wife as God was from sinners, yet He loved you. Your wife may be a sinner, but so are you. Don’t lose that perspective.

I've heard men say, "well, just don't love her anymore." If that's true, they are being disobedient to God's command. Husbands, God commands us to love our wives.

Romans 8:35-39 tells us even more about the love of Christ: *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Men, nothing can separate us from Christ's love, and we are to love our wives as Christ loves His church. That's a command of God. It's an act of your will. If you decide you're not going to do it, you won't, but if you decide to love her by the grace of God as Jesus loves the church, then no matter what happens, you'll love her.

A man once feared he was loving his wife too much. When a Christian asked him if he loved her as much as Christ loved the church, he answered, "No, not nearly as much." His friend replied, "Then you'd better love her more."

### • **Three Practical Ways to Love Your Wife**

#### 1. Consideration

First Peter 3:7 says, *"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them [wives] according to knowledge."* If you're going to love your wife, you must be sensitive, understanding, and considerate. ~~Women often say to me, "My husband never~~ understands me. He doesn't know where I'm at. He's sensitive to my needs. We never talk. He doesn't know what I feel. He doesn't know what I'm thinking about. He doesn't understand my hurts." I hear that over and over again. It builds a wall in marriages. When Peter said, *"Dwell with them according to knowledge,"* he was saying, "Be sensitive, be understanding, feel what she feels." It isn't what you get out of marriage; it's what you give that God is after.

#### 2. Chivalry

Peter continues in verse 7, *"Giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel."* In other words, husbands, realize that physically and emotionally you are stronger than your wives. Whatever happened to chivalry? Whatever happened to the custom of opening the car door for your wife? You may be fifteen feet down the driveway while she still has one foot out the door! Husbands, practice chivalry with your wives.

#### 3. Communion

First Peter 3:7 says, *"As being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."* The phrase "the grace of life" is like the hot fudge on a sundae. Marriage is the hot fudge on the top of life. And since you've inherited marriage, commune together, talk together, and share together. There's a spiritual thought here too: *"That your prayers be not hindered."* You need to share your spiritual lives.

God has given us the ingredients to make marriage work. He can reverse the curse when we're in Christ and filled with the Spirit. Husbands, when we look at our wives and determine in our hearts that we're going to love them as Christ love the church, making great sacrifices for them---even if they are unworthy---and being considerate, chivalrous, and willing to commune with them on a spiritual level, I'll promise you one thing: marriage *will* turn out to be the hot fudge on the sundae. It will be everything God ever made it to be, and you'll give a legacy to your children that will not only have an effect on their marriages but also in the marriages of generation to follow.

### **Focusing on the Facts**

1. How is marriage usually portrayed in movies, books, and television?
2. According to Genesis 2:18, why did God create a suitable helper for Adam?
3. Describe the perfect relationship that Adam and Eve originally had.
4. Cite four reasons for marriage.
5. Why did the serpent approach Eve rather than Adam? Explain the reversal of roles that took place as the woman sinned.
6. What are the four elements of the curse?
7. Describe how to have a marriage that works.
8. How have men abused women through the media?
9. Beside the curse, what else makes it difficult for marriage to work? What were some of the manifestations of corrupt human relationships in Genesis?
10. What does society extol that makes marriage even more difficult?
11. What does every man desperately need?
12. Our society denies \_\_\_\_\_ and extols \_\_\_\_\_.
13. What is the ultimate tragedy among relationships? Why?
14. How does Paul command husbands to treat their wives (Eph. 5:25)?
15. What is to be the standard of a husband's love for his wife (Eph. 5:25)?
16. Explain how Christ loved the church.
17. How are the husbands to love their wives according to 1 Peter 3:7?
18. What must husbands realize about their wives' physical and emotional makeup?

### **Pondering the Principles**

1. What is shaping your expectations for marriage: the world's fantasies or God's realities? Do television and magazines determine the kind of clothes you wear, the activities you participate in, and the relationships you have? If so, realize that they have established false expectations based on worldly standards of superficial and temporary value. Many times, unrealized expectations can be a source of conflict in a marriage. Sit down with your spouse or fiancé and list the expectations that each of you has for each other. Next, determine which of those have a biblical foundation. In that way you can resolve potential conflicts before they start. Focus on what you can give to your partner rather than what you can get. By doing so, you will help to prevent any expectations from not being met.
2. Husband, have you ever felt you don't love your wife anymore? Is the attraction you once had for her waning? If so, confess your lack of love, realizing that you are commanded to sacrificially love her as an act of your will. You may not feel romantic about her, but that

response will come if you commit yourself to doing what is right. If you work in an office with women, recognize that a lack of love for your spouse might lead to an increase attraction to someone at work and those you spend with your wife. Do you see a danger of communicating better with the women at work than with your spouse? Do you find yourself sharing intimate things with them that you don't even communicate to your wife? Sin is deceiving and can subtly entice you into pursuing relationships that have the appearance of being fulfilling but will actually break down the quality of love you should be investing in your wife. Read Proverbs 5:15-23 and 6:20-35. You may not currently be faced with the temptation to commit adultery, but prepare yourself for the appropriate response to that possibility.

3. Of the three practical ways to love your wife, in which area are you weakest? Write down on a card the things you can be doing to strengthen that area. Every morning and night during the next week, read that card as you seek to establish good habits of practical loving.