

Submissive Wives, Sacrificial Husbands

One of the least popular ideas in the Bible is that wives are to submit to their husbands. But the Bible doesn't just talk about what wives need to do. It also speaks of what husbands need to do and it calls husbands to sacrificial love. Now, it doesn't just speak of this one or two times. The Bible speaks in a number of different passages about the way husbands and wives relate to each other. And, about the submission of the wife and about the way the husband ought to relate to her. So let's begin just by reading some of the key passages in the scripture that deal with this matter.

Colossians 3 says very simply, "Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." Now, don't overlook the little phrase here, "in the Lord." Colossians is speaking of Christ in us, the hope of glory, of Christ in us and we in Christ. And now here is how married people are to relate as people who are in Christ and who are indwelt by Christ. Ephesians 5 says, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Titus 2 says, "Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands that the word of God may not be reviled." 1 Peter 3 says, "Likewise wives, be subject to your own husbands so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be one 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, 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, you 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.”

Well, those are the Bible passages and for some that doesn't sound very good. Here's the common version that some folks would like to promote today that they think is better than the Bible. Marriage is for same sex partners, not just for a husband and wife. Even if you are male and female, act like you're identical and interchangeable with no difference between the husband and the wife. Don't try to win a faithless spouse to Christ. Religion doesn't matter all that much anyway. All roads lead to the same place and the only thing that really matters is if you get along and love each other so don't try to win anybody over. Spend a ton on clothes and cosmetics to pump your own ego and to try to make an impression on others, that's the big thing. Wives, be pushy. Husbands, be wimpy. Treat your wives as the stronger partner.

Well, that's some rough version of it, if not put into those words, is more and more common in our society today, an attempt to improve on the Bible. And that might be what might be called maybe a more liberal approach. And some conservative folks may have a reaction to that by trying to preserve what they would call traditional roles. And so, let's think about that just a little bit. Here's a few questions. Even if you're not in favor of, let's say, same-sex marriage or total wimpiness of the man, you may still have some understandings of roles that would be different between a husband and a wife. When you'd ask, how are we really supposed to be different and what are some roles and differences that aren't necessarily called for by the Bible?

Now, what if a woman manages a bank and earns her family's main income while her husband teaches their children at home? Would you say, "Oh, man. They've got things really mixed up" or would you say, "Well, that's a little different than many arrangements but sounds okay to me." Now, what if a husband loves to cook and he loves to shop and his wife's good with numbers and good with money and asks his wife to manage the finances. Is he kind of doing feminine things and pushing her to do a more masculine thing? Well, what if a wife goes on week-long business trips and is away from home for long periods at a time and her husband is at home taking care of the kids while the wife is away?

Is that getting roles turned upside-down or switched around? Should the man be the one who goes on the trips and the woman the one who is at home watching over the kids? Our traditional roles based on the Bible and revealed by God and sometimes by traditional roles. We'd say, "Well, the man is supposed to be going out and doing the work and the woman is supposed to be tending the home." And you might even have heard a little hint of that if you were paying close attention in Titus 2. It said, "The older women should train the younger women to do a number of things include, working at home." Of course it doesn't say that the fact that they're working at home means they can't work anywhere else. That's maybe an unwarranted deduction.

If you pay attention to Ephesians 6 and it says, “Fathers, bring up your children in the training and instruction of the Lord.” That doesn’t sound like dad’s off on the long business trips while mom’s doing all the training, does it? So, sometimes the notions we have about traditional roles might not be based quite so much on the Bible, might not be revealed by God. Let’s think about where traditional roles, what we call traditional roles have come from. Some of it may come from the Bible. Some of it may come from natural differences between male and female. Some of it may just come from the way society has developed.

One of the key developments of the last two hundred years is the separation of work and family. And traditional roles say the man is the main worker, and the woman is the main family person. That is not revealed in the Bible, and it is in fact a fairly recent social development. In America’s colonial times, for instance, a lot of work and economic activity was done at home by family members working together. They might have a family farm. They might have a family shop where they have a store on the first level and the family living quarters on the level above the store. And I can give a lot of other examples where whole families would be working together with dad and mom and various kids chipping in and doing some of the work. And so work and home were really very tightly connected.

The industrial revolution of the 1800’s took work out of the home. The private realm of family and faith was separated from a more public realm of business and industry. In the industrial revolution, men were leaving their homes and going off to a different place of work, very often factories. Later on, more and more offices and the various office buildings that men would go to. But you’d have a new development where more and more of the place you work and earned your living was quite separate from the place you lived and were with your family.

Now, this shaped the roles of husbands and wives. Husband in the workplace and wife at home became the traditional roles. It doesn’t mean they always were the traditional roles because you had to have a separation of work and family in order to slot somebody in one or the other in the first place. Before that, men were involved in the work and at home at the same time. Women were involved at home and at work at the same time.

And so what we call traditional roles resulted to a considerable degree from the separation of work and family. Now, all of this is developed in Nancy Pearcey’s excellent book *Total Truth* in one of the chapters that she deals with this whole area in. And my analysis follows Nancy Pearcey’s very closely here. She draws on a lot of scholarly sources that I’ve also researched and does a great job of summarizing them.

Now, how were traditional roles developed or invented? Well, fathers began to spend a lot less time with their children in teaching and training and discipline. They were out at the office. They were out at the factory. They were off doing other stuff and so they did less and less with their children’s

training. Men, as a result, became more aggressively competitive and self-interested. They didn't have quite the same degree of relational ties that they previously had. Raising children became, almost solely, the mother's responsibility. She was at home with the children all day, bringing up the children and teaching them and caring for them.

Women became involved less and less economically because they were not off at work, and they were more and more dependent on their husband's wages. They were child-care people. The men were the money earners and if you lost your husband through death or divorce, a woman would often be very, very hard-pressed to earn a living. It's still very difficult, no matter the circumstances, but if you were very much involved in your husband's business and he died, you already knew most of the ropes and you would take over for him. If you weren't involved, as later happened with the division between home and work, then, you are in a very tough situation. You are quite dependent on your husband.

Women at home have less adult contact than when they were helping to operate a family store or a family farm. And they became socially isolated with young children and that became quite a challenge for many young mothers and it still is today for a good many stay-at-home moms with young kids. Sometimes, they feel like they're just surrounded by wee little ones and they yearn for a bit more adult contact. Again, this is a fairly recent development.

As traditional roles were invented, home became viewed as a private place for personal feeling and to be protected, as kind of a haven, from the competitiveness of a public commerce. You had a growing division between what's private and what's public. Women were viewed as guardians of virtue, who were supposed to control the men morally. Men were viewed as the workers and the go-getters and the be-out-there kind of people and women were to be the civilizing influence who helped the men to become moral and to be good men and to behave properly. But it was kind of the women's job to control the men and reign them in.

Now, eventually, the feminist movement called for modern women's roles to be less home-oriented and more career-oriented. In other words, more like what men have become and that wasn't necessarily a great thing to make women into what men have turned into as a result of the division of work and home. But that's what a lot of the feminist movement has done. Now, there are further developments.

Mothers increasingly replace fathers in Christian homes in leading family prayers. The men backed more and more away from that and the women more and more took over. It became socially acceptable for men to be spending little time with children and to be incompetent in home life and child-rearing. You can be a total dunce. Even today, you might not be able to do a load of wash. You wouldn't know how to cook a meal if your wife was not around. It kind of became socially acceptable for men not to help out with the kids and not know how to do much around the home.

Did you know that before the Industrial Revolution, child-rearing books were written mainly with men as the primary audience? And men would buy those books and study them for guidelines on bringing up children and leading a Christian home. Nowadays, child-rearing books are written by authors almost entirely with a female audience in mind. If you wrote a child-rearing book directed mainly at men and for men, you might have a very difficult time because for one thing, a lot of men are no longer very involved in the bringing up of the children. And, for another, a lot of men don't read. So, you're going to get hit coming and going by men not reading and men not being involved in home.

But, that was not always so. Men used to be readers and men used to be very involved with their children. Now, some traditionalist women try to make the whole world home-like. You have this division between work and home, and everything has to be kind of more homey and friendly. And bad competition, you had to keep away from that. Some feminist women just tried to get the women out of the home and into the workplace. So, you had different reactions to the kind of division, but nobody really just thought about the challenge, the nature of the division itself. This had an impact on churches.

Churches began to appeal mainly to women. They aimed at and targeted a more feminine approach and way of thinking. Preachers no longer may pronounce what's about public truth and things that should be believed by all and things that related to public events. More and more, preachers began to emphasize feeling and feeling close to God and what helped you to feel uplifted. And, a lot of this was connected to the attempt to connect more with a feminine audience.

Churches made religion more nurturing, softer, more comforting, a place for people to kind of feel soothed rather than abrasing and demanding calls of discipleship and dare I say, maybe a little bit more of a masculine emphasis. *Onward Christian Soldiers* was declared to be a bad song. Too militant, too masculine. Now, some evangelicals did promote a more manly religion of muscular Christianity and wanted to get a little bit more masculinity back in religion. So, that was one of the reactions to all that.

But meanwhile, you had these attempts by women to moralize men and what was the result? Men didn't want their lives to be run by the women and they rebelled against religion and increasingly rebelled against family where fewer and fewer men were willing to get married. And if they did get married, fewer and fewer are willing to stay married. And in the church situation, you had many congregations that became 70 percent to 80 percent female among the results because the churches have become so feminized. And the men were tired of being moralized and led around by the women who somehow have become, according to society, experts on children and religion.

Now, that's a bit of the impact of the separation of home and work. Now, as we think about these traditional roles, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones saw some of this decades ago already as a pastor in Britain. And he looked across the ocean at the United States and he said the husband is deliberately vacating the position, which God has put him in and leaving it in laziness to his wife. And he was not talking about

men who weren't going to work and who weren't earning the money. He was talking about the men who weren't leading in the home, who weren't instructing their children in the faith, who weren't involved with their kids. He was saying the husband is vacating the position God put him in.

"Fathers, bring up your children." That's the passage he was preaching on when he said this. And then he looked in various countries and then he said in the United States you have what may, more or less, be called a matriarchal society. And the man is increasingly regarded merely as the one to provide the dollars, the wage-earner, the man who brings in the necessary money. The woman, the mother, is the cultured person and the head of the home. And the children look to her. "This false unscriptural view of man and woman," says Lloyd-Jones, "and a father and mother leads to a matriarchal society, which seems to me is most dangerous. The result is of course, the growth of crime and all the terrible social problems with which they are grappling in that country. A matriarchal society, with the woman as the head and center of the home is a denial of the biblical teaching."

Now, some feminists complain about a patriarchal society by which they usually mean that men get all the best jobs and the most important government positions. But what if our biggest problem isn't patriarchy and government in the workplace, but matriarchy and marriage in the home, women leading the husband in the marriage and women being the primary leaders of the children in the home. Some people blame weakened families on women going to work. But what if the biggest problem is men abandoning the home? Think about it.

The Bible doesn't say much about what jobs or government positions a woman should or shouldn't hold. But the Bible does say that in marriage and family, the husband is the head of the wife. The husband bears primary responsibility for the affairs of the home and the family. Now, having looked at these traditional roles and how they developed historically, we've seen that they are not necessarily biblical roles. The reshaping of roles was mainly driven by economic, social, and cultural changes that came as work was separated from home. Traditional roles weren't always traditional. They weren't divinely revealed. They aren't required by God.

But there are some roles that are required. The biblically required roles are found in the drama of portraying Christ in this church of submissive wives and sacrificial husbands. So having dismissed or left aside now, what are sometimes labeled traditional roles were still left with what the Bible says about the role of portraying Christ in this church of submissive wives, sacrificial husbands. Marriage is a picture of Christ and His church. We've seen that in Ephesians 5, "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, His body and is Himself its savior."

And then quoting Genesis it says, "A man shall leave his father and mother, hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, this mystery of marriage." And, I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. You don't understand marriage until you have seen the reality of

Christ and His church. And your marriage is meant to portray the reality of Christ and His church. In the drama of marriage, sacrificial husbands, picture Christ's love for His church. "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and He gave Himself up for her." That's the language of sacrifice. Jesus laid down his life for the good of His beloved church.

Husbands are to pattern their relationship to their wives on the way that Jesus sacrificed Himself in love for His church. We, who are husbands, are always sending signals, portraying, dramatizing, preaching about Jesus Christ and His relationship with the church, in the way we relate to our own wives. And the way I relate to my wife may be telling hints of truth about Jesus or be telling terrible lies about Him. But, either way, the way I relate to my wife is saying something about Jesus Christ and I'm called to make it a life of sacrificial love. That really shows the love of Jesus Christ.

Submissive wives picture the church's response to Jesus Christ. As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Again a wife is always picturing or preaching something about the way the church submits to Jesus. It may be true, it may be a lie but she's always doing it. If she's honoring obnoxious and won't honor her husband and won't listen to anything he says and is always rebelling against him, she's saying well that's how the church ought to relate to Jesus.

If she loves him and honors his authority and seeks to please him and to work together with him and be his partner, his glad partner in everything, then she's saying that's how the church relates to Jesus Christ and how it ought. So you have sacrificial husbands portraying Christ and submissive wives portraying the church's response to Jesus Christ.

Now, in light of that big overview, let's now zero right in on what submission is not and what it is. And then we'll look at what godly and loving sacrifice is not and what it is on the part of the husband. So, on the part of the wife godly submission is not regarding your husband as smarter or better or worth more than the wife. He's physically stronger in most cases but that does not mean that he's intellectually sharper, that he's morally better, that he just is, generally, a more valuable person than his wife. It just doesn't mean that.

Godly submission is not just going along with your husband's cruelty and pretending that his sin is okay. If your husband is a harsh, abusive person, you do not have to pretend that it's just fine to be harsh and abusive. If your husband, has many, many bad habits you do not have to just go along with them and enable them. If your husband is an alcoholic, you do not have to pretend that he's not and put on a false front to everybody else. Godly submission does not mean being your husband's lackey or his doormat. Godly submission is not disobeying God in order to obey your husband. Scripture always teaches that we must obey God rather than men. I'll give you an example.

You might have a husband who does not want to go to church. And he says you shouldn't go to church either. You should stay home with him. You must obey God rather than men. God says, "Do not

forsake the gathering together” and if you are a Christian person you should be gathering with other Christians on the day of worship and praising God to gather with them and you should do it even if your husband says not to because you are obeying God and, in order to do that, you need to disobey a husband who forbids doing what’s right. And there are other examples that can be given as well.

So, you shouldn’t disagree with your husband or go against his will just for the fun of it, but where God’s clear will is involved, then you should choose to obey God rather than obey your husband. It’s not godly submission to do what your husband wants in contradiction of what God wants. Godly submission is not just being passive and stifling your own creativity and waiting for your own husband to say, “Okay here’s what’s we’re going to do.” and doing nothing unless he initiates it and expressing nothing of your own gifts and talent and just merging your personality into his. That is not what godly submission is.

Godly submission is not always keeping quiet and never questioning or criticizing or advising your husband. Your husband does not just need you to be an echo. He can go into an echo chamber and get that. You are to be your husband’s best adviser and that may sometimes mean asking some questions. It may sometimes even mean saying “I don’t think this is the best approach.” Or it may mean saying “Honey, that’s just downright sinful and I don’t think we should do that.” So, submission doesn’t mean you’re always just silent and you never question or advise your husband.

Now, you might say, well, what about that passage you read earlier from 1 Peter where he talks about a gentle and quiet spirit and winning your husband over without words. Well, remember a couple of things. One is that that passage is talking mainly to a wife who has an unbelieving husband and she’s already made her faith known to him but now she’s not going to keep nagging him about it. And he also can’t be expected to be loving her with a sacrificial love of a Christian husband.

If you’re a woman married to a Christian husband, he shouldn’t be such a knucklehead that you can’t talk openly about your faith in Jesus Christ and about what’s right and sometimes challenging him, if he’s not walking with the Lord. So, Godly submission doesn’t always just automatically mean that you stay quiet and never question.

Godly submission also does not mean doing nothing without getting your husband’s permission and doing nothing outside the home. We’ve already seen that traditional, so-called traditional role where a wife should just stay home and do nothing outside the home is not required in the Bible. Read Proverbs 31. The woman’s out there buying a field or bargaining over stuff and running a business, selling apparel and doing a variety of things. And it says her husband has full confidence in her. She doesn’t need her husband’s permission to micro-manage everything. He has confidence that she’s going to do what’s good for the family. And so Godly submission where you have a positive and healthy relationship with your husband does not require getting his permission on every little detail. On big

things, of course, you should have discussions together. But let's get rid of some false ideas about what submission is.

Now, what is godly submission? Well, above all it's submitting to Jesus and picturing the church's submission to her Savior. And, so as a wife, you say to yourself, "That's the deepest and highest purpose of my marriage is to show that I submit to Jesus and to the husband that the Lord has given me. And I want to picture the way that we submit to Jesus in the way that I submit to my husband apart from any details that are involved." Having that as your main picture and focus is vital.

Godly submission is wanting to honor your husband's authority and embrace his leadership. Don't marry a guy whom you can't respect, whose authority you can't honor, whose leadership you wouldn't want to follow. Let me add here that the Bible speaks of a woman submitting to her own husband. It's not saying that all women submit to all men. When you make the decision to marry one man, you know what that means? That the other three billion or whatever guys on the planet are the ones you don't have to pay—well, you can pay attention to him but you don't have to submit to them. You're submitting to your husband.

You're under his protection. You're honoring him. You're following his leadership. And sad to say, if you don't have an honoring relationship with your husband, you're probably going to be looking for it somewhere else. One way that often happens is that women who don't want to honor their husbands' authority and are gung-ho feminists wind up working in a company where their main leader is a male boss telling them what to do, who really doesn't even care about them very much. Feminists try to act as though if you can be liberated from your husband, then work for some other guy and take all your orders from him, you'll be set free forever. Well, you may have times have to work for somebody else, but let's not pretend that it's a huge improvement.

Oh, by the way, women who don't have husbands and yet have children will need to submit and get their help and support from somebody. And very often that ends up being the government. You'll find that in many societies where government takes a larger and larger role in providing for people, it is unmarried women who support that government. They are the ones who will generally vote for the party of bigger government. And you find that married women who get adequate support from their husbands, financial and otherwise, and also in her own earning but a married couple generally votes for the party of smaller government.

Now, this, I'm just generalizing here, there are obviously many exemptions but the party of large government is usually supported primarily by those who are not married. Married people want the government to take less of their money in taxes so that they can continue to support one another. But if you don't have a husband to support you and to submit to, you wind up submitting to the regulations of your government and living off of the support of your government.

Godly submission also involves supporting your husband to help him reach his full potential as a man of God. From Adam on, man has needed the support of others to help him and we need the support above all of a Godly wife if we're a married person. And if you're a man, you need to realize how much your wife is a key to your success. This is true in ministry as well. That's one of the reasons why people who are going to be elders or pastors should have a healthy marriage and a godly spouse as a major help toward reaching your full potential.

Now, there's a story about a man and his wife who went to a class reunion at their school. Now, the man happens to have become a United States senator and his wife had gone to the same school. And now they're going back to their reunion. And at the reunion they met somebody who had been the wife's former boyfriend, and so as they were leaving driving home, the senator said to his wife, "Boy, I bet you're glad you married me, a US senator instead of that man who hasn't achieved very much." And she said, "Well, if I had married him, he'd have been the senator." That's the way it often is that our achievements depend to a considerable degree on the support of a godly spouse. And godly submission on the part of the wife is to say, "I want this man to be the most he can possibly be with God's blessing."

Godly submission is compatible with thinking for yourself. God put you together with your husband to put two minds together, as to what's best for the two of you and what's best for your family. So, you still need to keep on thinking and including your thoughts and your voice in the conversation. Godly submission is more effective than nagging if a husband does need to be won over from ungodly ways. 1 Peter 3 indicates that, that if you've made your position clear to your spouse as a Christian and he's not, then don't keep nagging him. Show him what it's like to be a patient, kind, loving person full of the food of the spirit and that might win him over.

If the nagging is not over, whether to become a Christian but over some particular aspect of life, even there once you've made your position known and you submit to your husband, you're still more likely to win him over by the beauty of your spirit and by your winsomeness rather than being that woman described in Proverbs who's like a dripping, dripping, dripping or like somebody who would make a husband wish he was on the corner of a rooftop or out on the desert because that's better than living with a quarrelsome and nagging wife.

Husbands, of course, have to make sure before you say, "Oh, my wife is like a dripping," make sure you're not the drip because you might be the one who isn't paying enough attention to her and so she's resorting to nagging because she can never get your attention in any other way. But at any rate, Godly submission and showing your love for your husband is more effective than nagging, if you're trying to win your husband over.

Now, it's powered by calm contentment in Christ. You really can't submit to somebody else if you've got issues to prove for your own ego. If you're still trying to prove to yourself that you're

worthwhile, if you're trying to prove to yourself that you're intelligent, if you're trying to prove that you deserve to be accepted and admired and honored, if you've got a lot of stuff to prove, it's very hard to just submit to and honor somebody else. But if you're content in Christ, if you already know you're standing in Him, you know you're loved by Him and of course, if you're content also with your husband, then that really will power your ability to honor and submit to him.

Now, for men, there's something that Godly headship is not. It's not being superior in having more worth or more wisdom than your wife. It's not harsh bullying or forcing your wife to submit. Keep in mind, scripture tells the wife to submit, but it never tells the man to make his wife submit, does it? Her submission is to be entirely voluntary. One of the biggest mistakes a husband can make is to think the Bible authorizes him to make his wife submit. No! The Bible authorizes him to lead by his example, by his words, and by his sacrifice but not to force anything upon his wife.

In the case of children, we use discipline to compel obedience and to punish disobedience. But women are not children. The woman you married is not your kid. She's your wife. And you may wish she should submit but you listen to what the Bible tells you. And your calling is to love in a sacrificial way, not to make somebody submit. She might be a little more submissive if she finds out you're worth submitting to.

Godly headship is not independent of God's authority or the authority of the church and of the government. I know some men who are very insistent on the importance of being the head of the home and the head of the wife. And he is so very authoritative and he wants his wife and children to honor his authority. And he hasn't ever met a church elder that he would ever submit to and honor their authority. He never has anything good to say about the government but, boy. When it comes to his own authority he is Mr. Authoritative.

Godly headship is not independent of God's authority. It is not independent of the authority of the church. It's not independent of the government's authority. And so, I'll just take an example where a man is cruel and abusive to his wife. I believe she has every right and ought to report his abuse to the church elders and ask her husband to be disciplined by the church. She has every right and even an obligation to report him to the government. And if he's going to continue in his abuse, he ought to be punished by the government for that because he is under that authority. And so, your headship as a husband does not give you a blank check to ignore all other authorities and it does not mean your wife has to ignore the right of church authority and government authority to rein you in.

Godly headship is not ignoring your wife's wishes and her wisdom. Peter says, "Husbands, be considerate as you live with your wives" and you don't have the right to just ignore her because you're the head and you're the decision-maker and you're the leader. It's her job to follow and your job to lead. Oh, get a grip! You need to take consideration of your wife, not ignore her.

Godly headship is not getting what you want, insisting on your own way, and exalting yourself. The purpose of headship is to lead for the good of the marriage, of your wife, and of your children. And so you're leading for the good of others, not for yourself. Christ's headship, He did not hang on to all of His rights, as God. He emptied himself and became a servant, in order to bless others.

Godly headship isn't making every decision or being a control-freak or never delegating. You may delegate many things to your wife that you think she's better apt, or that you feel she can really do the work for you and you don't need to keep on messing with what she's doing all the time. So, headship does not mean you have to make every call and control everything that happens. Godly headship is a self-sacrificing love that pictures the self-sacrificing head of the church. It's very common among some Christians to say what would Jesus do, but it is a very important question for husbands to ask because your job is to be as Christ to your wife. To picture the self-sacrificing head of the church in the way that you love her and relate to her.

It does mean that you gently provide for and care for your wife. In Ephesians, it speaks of caring for your own body if you're the head well then, that means your wife is the body and what kind of dunce would you be if you were a head and you said, "I am mad at the arm today. I'm going to take a nasty chomp out of my arm." Well, if your arm is in pain, you're going to be in pain too if you're the head because all pain goes back right up to the brain. If you say, "Boy, I don't like the way my stomach was growling. I'm going to teach my stomach a lesson. I'm going to starve that stupid stomach for five days." Well, if that stomach is hungry, you, the head, are going to be mighty hungry too.

And so it is in relating to your wife. If you're going to cause pain to your wife, or you're going to be deprive her or do things to her that injure her, it's not just she who's going to suffer. It's going to come right back at you because she's like your body. And as Ephesians 5 says, nobody ever hurts his own body but he tends and cares for it just as Christ does the church and, just as you ought to your wife. You're gently providing and caring for her needs. You're protecting her. You're honoring her. You're empowering your wife to flourish in beauty, in joy, in holiness.

What did Ephesians 5 say? That Jesus does he wants his wife, the church, to be splendid, to be radiant without blemish. He wants her to rejoice in him. He wants her to be holy. And, so, your objective for your wife is to just bring out the maximum in her splendor, in her beauty, in her holiness, in her walk with God. And you're going to defend her against what would cause her harm or prevent that from happening. You're going to honor her.

The Bible speaks of honoring her as the weaker vessel in 1 Peter 3. Does that mean she's worth less? No, fine china is weaker than hard plastic but that doesn't mean the hard plastic is more valuable than the fine china. So, if you're honoring her as the weaker vessel, who's your fellow heir, that's not saying she's lesser than you are. That's just saying you've got more physical strength perhaps and you

may be also are able to deal with some tough situations better than she might be able to and you should protect her where you can.

Be considerate and aware of your wife's wishes, her weaknesses, her strengths. You got to listen to what she wants. You got to pay attention to where she might be weak. A young married man who doesn't understand anything about women's monthly cycles had better get a clue in a hurry. He needs to understand the kinds of things that will affect her moods. A man who's in his late forties or heading into his fifties and married to a woman of the same age ought to understand just a little about menopause and the way that that can affect the wife's moods and her sense of well-being.

You need to be considerate as you live with your wife and aware of what her weaknesses and vulnerabilities might be, as well as, what her strengths are and how to develop those and maximize her gifts in the kingdom of God. You pay attention to what she wants. Being considerate means listening very carefully to what she needs from you, to what she desires from you and then seeking to fulfill that.

Godly headship is taking the lead. It is taking the lead. I don't want to eliminate that leadership aspect of it or we've eliminated something very, very important. It's taking the lead in example. It's taking the lead in your actions. And, so for instance, when it comes to having a daily Bible reading time with your family in your home, if the wife is the one who's always got to be the one taking out the Bible and says, "Hey, guys, it's time to read. Let's do that" and if she's the one who has to kind of be the influence and the driving force on that every night, something's wrong.

Now, there's nothing wrong if once in a while, you're forgetting or getting sloppy and your wife reminds your family and reminds you but you need to be the one setting the primary spiritual tone in the home. You need to be the one, by your example of calm and wisdom and initiative bringing up discussions about how your children are going to be educated, about how they're going to be brought up. Don't just wait for your wife to say, "Oh, we had a crisis today. What are we going to do about it?" No, don't just be reactive. Be pro-active in your example, in your action, and in calling for discussions with your wife and talking things through with her.

Godly headship is making tough decisions and taking responsibility for the consequences. Some of the decisions that need to be made together as husband and wife still need to be made with recognition that the husband bears final responsibility for those decisions. And, this does not mean that every time there's a difference of opinion between you and your wife, you say, "Well, I'm the head of the house so, we're doing it my way." It may mean in some circumstances saying, "Well, we've talked this over and we can't quite seem to agree but neither option is sinful and since I really do like to please you, let's do it your way this time."

And, you make that, as the husband, you make that decision, but then, you can't backtrack later and say, "Well, we did it your way but it turned out badly. We should have done it my way!" Well, don't

be such a wimp. Once you've made the decision to do it her way then, you live with that and say, "This was our decision." Not just her decision. Once you've made the decision to go along with her choice, you've made the decision and you own it and you live with it along with her and, you don't say, "Well, I told you so, we should have, could have, would have." You accept responsibility yourself for the consequences.

There may be times where you believe God has a very powerful leading and you're quite certain that this has to be done and your wife may not quite concur with you. You might have to make the decision in some cases to do something your wife would prefer not to. But you don't do that for the sake of getting your way. You don't do it because it's easier for you or more fun for you. The only time you have the right to pull rank is because you think it's best for the family and it's right in God's sight. You don't pull rank just to get my way so that I can be happier at her expense.

So, there are times where a husband and wife can have a good, godly argument. What's a good, healthy argument look like when you've got this loving submission of a wife and a sacrificial love of a husband? Well, the husband as the head takes the initiative and at the discussion he says, "I'm going to sacrifice and we're going to do it your way because after all, I'm called to be the sacrificial one" and then the wife says "No, I'm going to submit and do it your way because I'm called to be the submissive one."

And he says, "No, no, no, no. no. I need to sacrifice so we need to do it your way." And she says "No, no, no. I need to submit. We need to do it your way." And they go back and forth a while. He wants to sacrifice really badly. She wants to submit really badly. And finally he says, "Well, I invoke my authority as your head. I'm called to sacrifice as Christ gave himself up for the church and I decree we're going to do it your way because it will bring you joy and be good for you, and that's that. I don't want to hear another word about it."

Now, if we have our arguments, in a different sense where we're just contesting who can get what they want then, even if you win the argument, you already lost. You win when you're both eager to display the life of Jesus Christ and the relationship of Jesus Christ to His church. And when you're doing your level-best to please the other person, to build her up in love, to honor her and, then if you do have to get into a little argument once in a while about how best we can please and help each other, that's fine. But these contests of wills don't even bring the biblical ideas of submission into that if all you're doing is butting heads over who gets to have their own selfish-pig way. You've already both lost that argument. And don't even drag biblical submission talk into that.

So it's a challenging thing to hear what the Bible says about sacrificial husbands and submissive wives. Those of us who are married hear this and we can't help but say, "Woe is me, I am far from that. My wife and I and in our relationship, we don't live up to those wonderful ideals and those wonderful

commands. But we desire to. And as we hear these things, it gives us another occasion to throw ourselves on God's mercy and grace."

One of the great things about being married is you find out a lot about what's wrong with you. When you're on your own or when your parents are kind of providing for you and making things work out, if you had a happy home, you might think "Oh, I'm a pretty good person." You find out how self-centered you are when you have a wife and kids, and they don't always want what you want. Then, you learn, "Can I really sacrifice? Can I really submit? Can I really put someone else's well-being ahead of my own?"

And when the answer is "Well, all too often I can't," you say, "Boy, I am a sinner. I need God's grace to forgive me. I need His spirit to change me. I am not going to be blaming my spouse for my own self-centeredness. Instead, I'm going to be asking God to change me, to be more the person that Christ Jesus wants me to be." And then, in that, there's the joy of being forgiven. There is the joy of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

May God give all of us, who are husbands, the grace to become more and more sacrificial husbands like Jesus is towards His church. And for those who are wives, may God give godly wives the grace to be truly submissive in love to the leadership of the husbands God has given them.