

## Foundations for Marriage Part 6

### Marriage: My Role, Your Role

Ephesians 5:21-29

Job descriptions are very common in the work place today.

They make sure that the employees and supervisor understand the job requirements and expectations for each position.

When the employee is evaluated at the end of the year, the evaluation is based on how they performed versus the job requirements.

If they did over and above the requirements they would get a higher salary increase.

If their performance was below standards for the position, they may get a lower salary increase if they kept their job and were not terminated.

We sometime view the different roles and responsibilities in the marriage as a job description that must be met or there will be trouble in the marriage.

This morning we will look at our attitudes towards roles in the marriage and how they impact the relationship.

I will cover the core foundation of what our attitudes should be based on our examples in Scripture.

Understand that each marriage is different and the roles that each person takes on may be different in each marriage.

However, there are some attitudes that must be addressed that tend to be central in the overall choosing of what roles we have in the marriage.

In our society there are many voices telling both men and women what their roles are in a relationship and what they should ultimately be like.

Can one person tell you exactly what your marriage should be like and every thing you should do to make your marriage perfect?

Is there one plan that is available that will guarantee you a 100% success rate if you do exactly as the plan says?

I wish there were, but sadly all anyone can offer are guidelines and it is up to each individual person to decide what they are or are not willing to do in their situation.

Marital roles today are not as clearly defined as they used to be.

Sixty years ago the chores would have been divided up based on gender, or the man holding the supreme position of doing hardly anything related to household chores.

That is not to say that men and women could not cross over, but society had roles that was acceptable, especially in marriage.

There are some who still try to hold to these roles although it has become evident that in order to build strong marriages, we must stop looking at everything as a gender specific.

If all things were equal and there were no pre-defined gender roles, would the responsibilities still be divided up the same?

Everybody's situation is different, but there are some things that we have in common.

My goal in this message is to address our attitudes in the choosing or assigning of roles in our marriages.

Whatever you and your spouse have decided what works best for you is fine, as long as the attitude behind the decisions fosters the belief that equality exists between the different job roles.

### Men's Biblical Responsibility

Notice the first point that is made is that each partner should submit to one another.

One translation says that as you stand in awe of Christ, submit to the each other's rights.

The premise is that both partners must have an attitude that will help the relationship.

This means that each person must seek, through their actions, forever, to win their partner over.

This is not saying that you are trying to get your way, but that each partner may find delight in showing preference to his or her mate.

Also keep in mind that each partner has rights that should be respected and not violated.

Submission has gotten a very bad rap over the years.

If a man submits to his wife then he is "henpecked".

If a wife submits to her husband then she is being run over by a man who is controlling her.

One of the definitions of submit is "to yield to the control or power of another"

If you men think women do not have power, you are truly living in a dream world.

The right woman can bring a man to his knees and make him lose his mind.

If we recognize that they have power and you are able to position yourself so that you can use that power, then life can be good.

It is only when we try to harness that power and redirect it towards what we (men) feel is acceptable does it get dangerous.

The Women's Liberation Movement came about because for years men tried to harness the power of women.

If we learn to submit to one another, then the power that women have can be used by the men and the power that the men have can likewise be used by the women.

To offer fair balance, I have seen men who dried up emotionally and spiritually under the power of a woman, where she exercised her power just as men in the past did over women.

When we learn to submit to one another, this power struggle fades as each partner begins to use the strength of their spouse.

The roles begin to evolve versus being anointed on a person based on their gender and their supposed "rights"

Now skip down to verse 25 that addresses our men.

Paul writes that we are to love our wives as much as Christ loved the Church.

How much did Christ love the Church? He gave Himself for her.

We are told to love our spouses and sacrifice for them as Christ did for us.

We are asked to give ourselves up, even to death if necessary, for our wives, which is a stronger expression of devotion than our wives are called to make.

Paul goes further to clarify this statement when he says that we should love our wives as our own flesh.

This is a great responsibility because we do know how to love ourselves and this same love of self should be evident in our love towards our spouse.

There are many Scriptures that demonstrate Jesus' love for His Church, but I only want to examine one that I believe demonstrates what the attitude of a man should be in his marriage.

**(Jn 13:3-5; 12-15)** – *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God got up from supper and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord and you are right for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you"*

**In Jesus time, they wore open sandals that made it necessary for them to wash their feet often.**

It was customary for a host to provide water for his guest upon their arrival so that they might wash their feet. (Genesis 18:4, 19:2)

Sometimes a servant performed this service (1 Sam. 25:41).

It was the most menial task that a servant could perform.

However, if you did not wash your own feet, it was a sign of deep mourning (2. Sam. 19:24).

Luke records an incident in which Jesus rebukes Simon the Pharisee for not having shown the common courtesy of providing Him water to wash His feet, while the same time He commends the woman who washed His feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with ointment (Luke 7:36-50).

Such an act of love prompts Jesus to declare that this woman, known as a "sinner" is forgiven.

One more thing, **remember that Jesus was the "teacher" and the disciples were the pupils.**

Disciples would generally perform all sorts of services for their rabbis, but they were excluded from taking off the sandals of their rabbi.

Likewise they were not allowed to wash the feet of their rabbis.

John the Baptist said when referring to Jesus "He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie"

He was speaking from two levels, one from the traditional viewpoint just mentioned, and the other because he fully understood who Jesus was.

With that little history, maybe you now understand better what Jesus did.

He was the King and He did something that was unheard of.

Peter was caught so off guard that he initially did not want Christ "the Teacher, the Rabbi" to wash his feet.

This was the lowest of the lowest acts that a servant could do - yet Jesus did it.

Jesus also told the disciples that they should wash one another's feet - again to demonstrate humility in our service to one another.

**Why did I choose this example for the men as to how we should view our role in our marriage?**

Remember, Paul said we should love our wives as much as Christ loved the Church.

Christ demonstrated His love in His service, in His attitude, in everything He did and continues to do for us.

This is the love that we should have for our spouse.

Let me demonstrate foot washing for you so that you can see what it does to the person doing the washing.

First, once the person whose feet are to be washed is in position, you must kneel below that person.

When you put yourself beneath someone else, you are demonstrating your willingness to yield to them and place them higher than you are.

Next as you begin to wash their feet, especially back in biblical days, you did not know what you would find between the toes and how the foot would smell. This made the job even harder.

As the woman did for Jesus, after she finished washing His feet, she wiped them down with perfumed ointment.

Can you see now why this task greatly showed someone's willingness to humble themselves and become servants?

As I was preparing this message, I realized that I too had taken on some of the attitudes of the generations before me.

I want every man to re-examine his thoughts towards household chores.

This may seem like a small task, but stay with me.

If washing feet is the lowest thing a person could do in service to another person, then the things on our wives' list should be no problem at all.

What if every man here made a commitment to serve their wife for the next 30 days like this?

The things you are already doing keep doing them.

The things that you are not currently doing are what I want you to add to your list and do for the month of August.

The point in this exercise is not for the wives to get even with us, but to give us an opportunity to demonstrate the depth of our love for them.

Some of you may be thinking how does doing something around the house demonstrate my love for my wife?

It is very simple. Our wives do a lot of things because they know either we will not do it or we may do it wrong.

There are some things that they have even stopped asking us to do because they are tired of asking.

Acknowledging their request today is the first step that each of us can make in re-establishing the relationship that God has for us.

Are you in agreement with me?

So you have your marching orders.

For a month, the things on the list that your wife would like for you to do are the things that you will do.

Next time, we will address what the Scriptures say about the role of the wives.