

Foundations for Marriage Part 7
Marriage: My Role, Your Role Part 2
Ephesians 5:21-22

Last time I dealt with the attitude men have towards the roles they play in their marriage.

The point was that men are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church.

I also shared with you the story about how Christ washed His disciples' feet and how that was considered at that time, the lowest form of servanthood – the least of all tasks.

Christ did that to demonstrate how we should be humble in our service to our spouse.

This morning I will complete this message by reviewing what the Scriptures say about the wives' role in the marriage, taking a look from a different point of view.

Women's Biblical Responsibility

Ephesians 5:21-22 *"And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husband, as to the Lord."* (NAS)

Ephesians 5:21-22 *"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. Wives be subject, be submissive and adapt yourselves, to your own husbands as a service to the Lord."* (Amp)

This verse of Scripture is one that most men know and understand even if they do not know any other Scripture in the Bible.

They know intuitively and from being taught that their wives are supposed to "submit" to them because they are the man and the head of the house.

Some even believe that the Scriptures command the wife to obey her husband.

Sorry guys, as an FYI, even though it is stated in some marriage ceremonies, the word "obey" does not appear anywhere in the Scriptures pertaining to a wife's responsibility to her husband.

Although that would be a wonderful thing sometimes, our wives are not commanded to "obey" us.

They are called to obey Christ.

The verse in Ephesians is not referring to the wife obeying her husband and submission in this verse does not mean obey.

*To be subject to means that one willfully yield their "own" rights in preference for another.

The two key words here are "willfully" and "rights".

Each partner has rights that must be recognized and respected.

However, there are times when we may choose to yield our rights in preference to our spouse.

This is what Paul is saying to the wives.

Paul says that the woman's submission to her husband is done out of her service to the Lord – not that the man is all that and is worthy of her being submissive to him.

Again, do not forget that we are to submit to one another so it goes both ways.

When we look at Scripture and evaluate it from Christ's perspective, it is easily understood that Christ valued women and allowed them to learn with the men.

Thus He made women for all intents and purposes, equal to men.

He also allowed women to serve in ministry work and there are several references to women functioning in ministry roles.

1 Cor. 11:11-12 speaks of the unity between man and woman. It says *"However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God."* (NAS)

Woman originally came from man, but that was the first and last time that happened.

Since that time, man has come from woman.

*The point here is that the woman's responsibility is as important to the man's responsibility in God's eyes.

Their role, however defined, is just as important as the man's role.

(Galatians 3:28) *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

I share this with you so that when you consider the position of the wife, you understand that whatever she does is by choice – by her own free will in service to her Savior.

Secondly, whatever role she plays is equal to the man.

When men and most importantly women start seeing women as equals in the marriage the blessings begin to flow.

There is an old movie that came out in 1973 called "Five on the Black Hand Side". It's a movie about a family where the father rules the house with an iron fist. He picks out her clothes and makes a list of things she should do with her day – a full list including breaks. Finally she has enough. She cuts her hair, refuses to do any housework, cooking, etc until she is recognized as an equal partner. As you would guess, although he resisted as best as he could, the father could not

deny that his wife was his equal. The movie ended with his final acceptance of her.

***Every wife brings something unique to the marriage and should not have to fight to use it.**

Let's look at what Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, had to say about women. I want you to go back and read (Proverbs 31:10-31).

This description is a lot different from the traditional views men have had of women.

Proverbs 31 speaks of a virtuous woman and the things that she does to take care of her family.

When you read these verses, the first thing you find a woman of this nature is very valuable.

Then you find that she is the personification of wisdom, a business woman, a provider for her family and shows good judgment and negotiation skills.

She has many skills that make her an asset and blessing to her family.

It also says that her husband is known because of her.

The things she does reflect positively on him – as well as herself.

She is a woman of strength and dignity who receives the constant praise of her children and husband.

This is not the description of a woman who does not have any rights, brings nothing to the relationship and should be totally dependent on her husband.

God has placed within her the ability to demonstrate sound wisdom in the most adverse of circumstances.

One of the fears common to men is that our wives will outgrow us.

For a man to have this fear he looks for ways to make his wife doubt her abilities and remain dependent on him.

That man loses in the long run.

Not only does he not receive the wise counsel that she can provide but he also does not receive the many other blessings that can come his way through the gifts that God has placed within that woman.

***Ladies, it is important that you understand your role in your marriage and your role as a woman of God.**

I will not stand here as a man and give you a complete list of things God wants you to do, but I will share this with you pertaining to what Paul said in Ephesians 5:22.

What he said was *"Wives be subject, be submissive and adapt yourselves, to your own husbands as a service to the Lord."* (Amp)

The wives were not commanded to love their husbands, but to be subject and/or submissive to them.

Wives, with all of the gifts that God has bestowed within you, you should use your gifts to benefit the whole family.

Wives are not commanded to love their husbands, they could do that - but to be submissive, willingly, when you see all of the husband's flaws is more difficult.

Also, the Amplified version increases our understanding when it adds that wives should adapt to their husbands.

This is easy to be misunderstood also. Adapting means to take your gifts, what God has placed within you, and use them to balance your partner.

Let me give you this example to help you understand this.

Say you lived all of your life in Hawaii where it never got very cold. You never had a need for a coat or clothes for the winter. However, for some reason you decide to move to Kansas in October and for the first time you experience some cooler weather. By December you realize you need clothes that will keep you warm. So you go to the store and buy warmer clothes. What have you done is adapt to your environment.

All of us over time adapt to situations around us, but it is important for the wives to adapt to their husbands and in the normal course of living, the husband also does some adapting.

But I want to do a check before I close.

From everything I have read and all of the women that I have spoken to, not a one would have a problem submitting to a man who was fully doing his job – which included treating her like a queen (my words, not God's).

Not a one would turn away from a man who truly adored her and treated her as his equal.

So as I have said before, if your wife won't submit, look at what you are doing.

So, how can this be done? How can a woman submit and adapt to her husband?

Does it mean he gets to set the rules and she does everything he says?

Does it mean that he makes all of the decisions and she follows along?

No – it means she fully understands her place in the relationship and expects her husband to honor it.

However, here are a few things wives can do to get started down this path. As the men had their assignments from last time, you will have some this week.

Submitting and adapting to your husband can be accomplished by:

- Spending time with your husband – finding out who he truly is. This will help you adapt to him and better balance out the relationship.
- When you recognize your husband has weaknesses – fill the gap. I truly believe that God will use spouses to benefit each other – if we will listen and yield to His leading.
- Maintain your respect for your husband. Men have many flaws, but recognize that your gifts may balance out his flaws. You are not perfect; neither are we.
- Have a servant's attitude. Serving one another is not a negative thing. If done correctly it can turn your thorn bush marriage into a rose bush.

Last time I closed my message by asking the husbands to do something – wash their wives feet and to do whatever they have on the list for one month.

Several of the men wanted to know what the women would have to do.

My request to the women is this: Find one thing to compliment him on each day.

We do not like to admit it, but the male ego needs stroking every now and then.

Those things we are doing for the month, let us know how we are doing.

Finally, spend some time this month doing something with your husband that is important to him.

If that is watching a game, going to the movies, bowling....., whatever it is, do it with them.

But here is the kicker, do that one thing with your husband that you do not like.

You all know what it is, the thing you complain about when they do it.

That is what your assignment is for the month.

I will close with this. It is never easy to give up your rights for the benefit of someone else.

But I point each of us back to the Ephesians 5:21 – submit to one another.

This is what will build and maintain a marriage.

I pray that both you and your spouse will increase your love, affection and understanding of each other which will strengthen your marriage.