

Foundations of Parenting - Roles of Husband & Wife

Introduction

A few preliminary comments before we get into the material substance of the parenting classes.

First, be careful about your response to what is taught. Today I want to lay the foundation for God's design for the family beginning with the roles He has given each person within the family: wife, husband, parents & children. It will be easy to find areas for which you can criticize others in the family for their short-comings and failures, but I warn you in advance that if you do, you will only end up fighting and hurting each other. I want you to listen carefully to what is said about each role within the family plays, not for the purpose criticizing, but so that you may understand the role God has entrusted to them and then respond with encouragement, help and effective prayer. As Christians, we are to build each other up in godliness instead of tearing each other down by ungodly criticism.

Second, be aware that due to the prevalence of feminist thought and progressive philosophy in our culture, discussion of family roles and structure has become controversial even in the professing church. By feminist thought and progressive philosophy I am referring to the general view of women and their roles that have come to be accepted by most Americans. You will recognize these views when you start feeling uncomfortable by what I say.

Third, be aware preachers speak on these issues with fear and trembling because we risk a back-lash even from professing Christians. Some of you will reject what I will say simply because I am not living your life. My background is different than yours. I am not a woman. I only have sons. My sons are not the same age as your children. To some, that disqualifies me to speak on your role and how you are doing in your parenting. However, I know I am very qualified to speak on the subject because I have the Word of God. The issue is not how well I relate to you or what I think. The issue is what God has said. My goal is to explain what God has revealed in His Word. You and I are both obligated to conform ourselves to His Word. I will let you know when I give you my opinion, for you are not obligated to conform to that, but you are responsible to obey God's Word.

Fourth, I am only going to briefly touch on God's design for marriage and the role of the wife and husband since I have covered those issues many sermons which can be found on our website. However, I do need to quickly review these because marriage and the role of each spouse is critical to good parenting. For those who have suffered from their own sin and / or the sin of others so that you find yourself either unequally yoked to a non-believer or are a single parent, then it will be more difficult for you, but by God's grace, He will enable you to successfully raise your children if you will follow the principles and precepts of His word.

God's Design for the Family - It's Foundation - Genesis 2

The foundation for the family is found in God's design for marriage. Recall from Genesis 2 that God formed man out of the dust of the ground. He then declared that ¹⁸ *It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.* (Someone called alongside to assist). Adam then named all the kinds of animals God brought to him, but there was *"not found a helper suitable for him"* (20). God then caused Adam to go into a deep sleep, and God then took a rib from Adam and from it and fashioned it into a woman and brought her to him. He then said, ²³ *This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.* (Isha - female man). Moses then declares, ²⁴ *For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.* ²⁵ *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

There are no children yet, but they are a family. The family unit begins with the union of the husband and wife. Children only increase the size of the family. That is a very important point. You and your spouse are already a family before you have children, and you will still be a family after your children grow up and leave home. The foundation for the family is in the marriage relationship

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31 and then adds in verse 32 *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* That is the explanation of the purpose of marriage. It is to be a picture of Christ and His relationship to the church, so marriage is actually more about the glory of God than the individuals involved. That also means there is hope for a marriage because God cares about it more than you do. Any two people willing to follow God’s design for marriage can have a wonderful and joyful relationship, for that is always a benefit of doing things God’s way and bringing glory to His name. The marriage will still take a lot of work, but God will use you in each other’s lives to mold you into what you are supposed to be.

If you have a difficult marriage, then set your goal to please God and do things His way and you will be able to have joy and peace in Him even if your spouse remains obstinate. Remember, there is no such thing as an irreconcilable marriage, just individuals that refuse to be reconcilable to God and their spouse. And according to 1 Cor. 7:14, a believing spouse provides sanctification to an unbelieving one and may be the means by which God will bring them to salvation.

If you want God’s blessing in your family, then you need to follow God’s design for it, and that starts in fulfilling your role in the marriage relationship. You cannot be a better parent than you are a husband or wife. If you are a single parent, then what I will be saying about these roles will simply have a greater manifestation in your relationship with the Lord Himself. The Lord will provide the single father with the help he needs. The Lord will provide the direction and emotional support that the single mother needs. You must seek in Him what you would have otherwise sought in your spouse. The same principle applies to those with unbelieving or contentious spouses.

Let’s quickly review the roles of the wife and husband.

The Role of the Wife

The apostle Paul comments on the order in which God formed man from the dust of the ground and fashioned woman from his rib in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 saying, *“For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.”* This is significant because it shows that she is not independent of him.

That idea is repulsive to feminist thought, and tragically many Christian women follow such humanist beliefs instead of God’s word. Paul was not a male chauvinist, in fact he elevated the position of women in the ancient world, but the Apostle also understood what God had said on the subject and did not compromise on the truth. Neither should we. Ladies, do not trade in the high position God has given you as a woman for the absurdity of feminism that claims you have more value if you become more like a man. Be feminine, not a feminist, and praise the Lord He made you a woman.

Neither Adam or Eve had any problem with the roles God had given them while they were in the garden, but with their fall into sin, contention entered their relationship. The curse of sin has made marriage and every human relationship difficult since then because mankind is basically selfish wanting his own way instead of God’s.

God’s design for marriage is against this curse of sin. Marriage divine style moves both husband and wife back into their proper roles within which they can again compliment one another rather than conflict with each other. Paul gives further explanation of God’s design for the family in Ephesians 5.

In this section of Scripture, Paul is explaining, challenging and commanding Christians to walk according to God’s wisdom and not in the foolishness of this world. That includes following the Lord’s will to make the most of your time and opportunities during your short stay on this earth. That requires you to be filled with the Spirit, that is, to be influenced and controlled by Him. The evidence of the Spirit

controlling you will be by your praise and worship of the Lord and by your relationships with others, especially within the family. A man and a woman cannot create the kind of marriage and family life God designed for them unless they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

The key for godly relationships is found in Ephesians 5:21, *“and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”* We are to voluntarily submit to one another. There is no place for pride and arrogance in the life of a Christian. You are to be humble and consider others more important than yourself as commanded in Philippians 2. Such humility and courtesy reflects your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul then applies this directly to marriage command in the next verse, *“Wives, (be subject) to your own husbands, as to the Lord”* (Eph. 5:22). The verb, “subject” or “submit” is actually supplied from verse 21 and not in the text of the verse itself. Out of the command for mutual submission arises the priority for the wife to do this to her husband as she would to the Lord. This is not subservience or obedience out of fear, but rather out of love for Christ that is then extended to the husband. This is actually a major way that a godly wife does serve Christ, but her ability to submit to her husband is directly related to her relationship to God and being filled with the Spirit. This cannot be done without the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 3:1-6 gives the same command along with additional specific ways she is to do this and how to demonstrate godliness. Again, I have gone over this previous sermons and seminars, so I will only emphasize here that it is easier for a woman to submit to a husband that is fulfilling his role in loving her and leading her to greater holiness, but even if he is disobedient to the word, she is to win him by her *“chaste and respectful behavior.”* Her humble submission to living according to God’s command is what God will use to draw her husband to the Lord.

Let me quickly add that submission does have limitations. First, submission is primarily to God, then to your husband. You cannot submit to anything he may ask you to do that would violate God’s commandments. As Peter and John said before the Sanhedrin - *“we must obey God rather than men.”*

Second, submission does not mean you are to allow your husband to abuse you. 1 Corinthians 7:10,11 gives principles that can apply in such situations, and applying the laws of our land against physical abuse can be the wake up call for such a man. A little jail time on earth to see the need for salvation is much better than eternity in hell.

Third, submission does not mean coddling an unbelieving husband so he will not leave. As 1 Corinthians 7:15 points out, you are to live a godly life with all humility and with all righteousness. If your spouse cannot stand to see Jesus Christ living in you, then you are free to let them leave. Just be sure it is righteousness of Christ in you that is driving them away and not you.

Turning back to Ephesians 5, verses 25-33 all deal with the husband’s role, and then at the end of verse 33 there is more command to the ladies, *“and let the wife see to it that she respect (or reverence - KJV) her husband.”*

To be direct, he may never admit it, but he wants and needs someone to believe in him and encourage him to succeed. God has given that role primarily to you wives. You treat him with respect and he will try to take on the world. If you belittle him, you will either lose him or you will watch him shrivel up into a shadow of the man he is supposed to be.

You say there is much about your man that you do respect? The scripture does not say he has to be perfect for you to respect him. Start in the areas you do respect him and then learn from there to treat him with respect.

The Role of the Husband

Turning our attention now to the husband, we go back to Ephesians 5:23 and find that the reason for the wife’s submission is directly related to the role of the husband. *“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.”* Headship is a position of authority and responsibility, not of superior to inferior. The wife is a fellow heir of the grace

of life (1 Peter 3:7). She is different, not inferior. In fact, she may have superior abilities and skills in many areas compared to her husband, but the issue here is not one of ability and skill but of order and purpose.

Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 11:3 that God the Father is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of every man, and man is the head of a woman. This is not arbitrary, but follows the order of creation, as Paul points out in 1 Timothy 2:13.

Many men would like the passage to stop there and leave them to be the ruling despot of the family, but the passage is clear that not only is he to also be in “mutual submission” (v. 21), but he is responsible to carry out the commands of his head, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). He does not have the right to make up his own rules. Paul continues on in verses 25 -33 to show how the husband is to carry out his God given role of leadership in the home. 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.*

The husband is commanded to love his wife three different times in this passage. Husbands, if you will fulfill your role, it will be much easier for your wife to fulfill hers because it is easy to submit to and respect someone that truly loves you. Paul gives three parallel examples to explain what it means to love in this way.

First, love her like Christ loved the church. That is an impossible standard without a close relationship and walk with the Lord. This love is not about warm fuzzy feelings of affection for her. It is also not a response to how pretty, smart or kind she may be. Those are fine and you should tell her your appreciation for those things. However, this is a self-sacrificial love done in the pursuit of holiness.

Jesus “*gave Himself up for [the church]*” (vs. 25). He sacrificed Himself, yielding His own life for the benefit of the church, and He did it for sinners (Romans 5:8). This is a *agape* love which is centered in the best interest of the other person and not in yourself. It is self-less rather than selfish. It requires both humility and figuring her out (1 Peter 3:7). Your headship is not about getting the family to please you, but rather you sacrificing yourself to lead them into what God wants. And what God wants is holiness.

The text is specific that Jesus sacrificed Himself that He might sanctify the church. His goal is that the church be holy and blameless, without spot or wrinkle. That is to be your goal for your wife. You must walk with the Lord yourself and then lead her to walk with you in doing the same. As much as you may want to please her, your primary concern is to be pleasing the Lord first, for the goal is her holiness, not her happiness. You are her head. Be a godly example and promote and encourage her to walk in righteousness. Do not entice her to compromise and sin.

Second, husbands, you are to love your wife as your own body (vs. 28). You are to nourish and cherish her with the same attention and affection you do for the care of your own body - physically, mentally and emotionally.

Third, you are to love her as yourself (vs 33). That is not as great as Christ’s sacrificial love, but it is very practical. Whatever you would do out of love for yourself, you should do for your wife.

Summary

The role of both husband and wife in marriage is to submit to the Lord and follow Him. Arising out

of that is a mutual submission and love for one another so that they compliment each other and bring glory to the name of Jesus Christ. Within the marriage relationship the wife is to submit to her husband's headship and respect him. The husband is to love her and sacrificially lead his wife in holiness.

Why is marriage and the roles of the husband and wife so important in parenting? Simply because you cannot be a better parent than you are a husband or wife. It is from that relationship that your children will pattern the relationships they have with other people, including their own future spouse. If you are a single parent, then you have to make sure that your child(ren) can actively see those same character qualities in your walk with the Lord and your relationships with other people.

Foundations of Parenting - Roles of Husband & Wife

Introduction

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

God's Design for the Family - Genesis 2

The Role of the Wife:

1 Corinthians 11:8-9

Feminine or Feminist

The Fall & Marriage

Ephesians 5 - Walking in Wisdom, Being Filled with the Spirit, Submission

Submission of the Wife

Ephesians 5:22 -

1 Peter 3:1-6

Limits to Submission

- 1
- 2
- 3

Respect of the Husband - Ephesians 5:33

The Role of the Husband

Headship - Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 11:3

Mutual Submission - Ephesians 5:21

Love as Christ Loves the Church - Ephesians 5:25-27

Love as Your Own Body - Ephesians 5:28-29

Love as Yourself - Ephesians 5:33

Summary & Importance of Marriage in Parenting