

The WIFE in Ephesians 5

Read Ephesians 5:22-33. This section deals with the marriage relationship; it's order and responsibility. There is always a great benefit if we live according to how God has designed and created us to live. Sometimes we think we know better, but who are we to question the Lord's ways? God has designed marriage with Himself as the Head, and that being the case, He has the right to order its operation the way He pleases – which in turn is best for us. It is in following His plan for marriage that we find Him in the middle of the marriage relationship bringing the love, joy, peace and the ultimate fulfillment that marriage was meant to have. With two-thirds of today's marriages ending in divorce today, it behooves us to obey God's method for a successful marriage. The world has demonstrated that it cannot continue successfully in a God-ordained relationship without God being there to make it work. Following God's direction in His Word is 100% successful.

As a background to our study, man has had responsibility placed on him from the beginning of creation. In the garden after God created the first man Adam, He created Eve and brought her to Adam. When Satan entered the scene in Genesis Chapter 3, we notice he makes his attack on the woman, ***“he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”***. Notice the first thing he does is get Eve to question the Word of God and, by implication, God's motive toward Eve. If Satan could separate Eve from God, he stood a great chance of gaining the authority that was given to Adam. Why? Because he knew she would have the most influence on the man whose authority was given by God.

The failure of Eve was the downfall of the human race, but God blames Adam. Notice Paul writing to Timothy in 1 Tim 2:13 says ***“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”*** Very interesting! God assigned the blame to the one who was in “authority”, yet they both paid for the sin because all descend from Adam - even Eve. She wasn't spared the personal pain which resulted from Adam's sin and further, it caused God to send His only Son to pay for that sin. Much was changed because of Eve's decision and the lack of leadership from Adam. Having fallen into sin, the two were expelled from the garden God had prepared for them and now life would be under the constant challenge of a sinful nature.

This has been the history of man from Adam's sin to the present - man living apart from God. This creates a problem within family relationships; for men try to rule in oppression and despotism and women attempt to gain leverage by various means of persuasion. Certainly, this is part of our old nature and there is no righteousness in its motives, methods or actions. However, when we give our life to Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God enables us through His power to live as God has designed. The man can freely love his wife and she can trust God with her husband and respect his position in marriage, which is ordained by God. No marriage is perfect in this life since we still carry our old flesh, but the opportunity for a glorious marriage according to God's design is possible with Jesus at the center of each spouse's life.

The biggest challenge for wives today is to manage their families by the guidance of the Word of God. Submitting to their husbands is a simple and fulfilling way of life, especially when their husbands love them properly. For wives find their security in the love given by their husband and this puts her at peace. But if a husband treats his wife in a cold harsh manner, this leaves his wife frustrated and insecure. These insecurities from the lack of godly love can result in constant questions and challenges to decisions being made by the husband. In this situation, many wives can think like this; *“I don't know what he really thinks of me, he certainly doesn't treat me like he loves me. One of these days he is going to make a decision that could cause the end of our marriage. I better make sure he doesn't stray too far from his responsibilities as a husband and a father...”*. When a marriage is only holding on by a thread, this type of thinking can easily be the result. It is in this type of situation that a wife must learn to trust God with her husband. In a strong spiritual marriage, a wife gains great support and security from her husband because he is fulfilling his role as the provider and protector of the family. Unfortunately many women give up when their husband's don't walk with God and this causes further breakdown in the family. The end in these situations is almost always tragic. But, it doesn't need to be.

God has created family relationships such that He holds men responsible for their families and women responsible to support the one God has put in authority, namely the husband. For a wife to fight against her husband, she is flying in the face of God, since He has ordained the husbands role as the leading position. Wives need to understand the order which God has ordained so the family will function properly.

The issue isn't whether a husband is a believer or not. There are husbands who are unbelievers and are great fathers and husbands, but are obviously not spiritual men. There are men who are believers and are terrible husbands and fathers. The issue is as Peter says in 1 Peter 3:1 ***“wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word...”***. When a man is disobedient to Gods Word – believer or unbeliever, for either can fit this bill – that doesn't change the requirement of the wife to still submit. Certainly, no wife should support sinful practices that her husband is placing upon her. But there are many women with unbelieving husbands that are not asked to be involved with sinful behavior. The issue at hand is whether or not a wife can have an effective walk with God when their husbands are not fulfilling that leadership role as they should before God. The answer is YES! This is Peters whole point in 1 Peter 3:1-6.

Since we are discussing the behavior of wives in the marriage relationship, lets focus on them and put the husbands aside for now. There are women who end up destroying their families by their own ungodly behavior. This is because they are involved in sinful

practices that corrupt their own lives and those of their family. Or because though living for God, they fight the role that God has ordained for them in the support position rather than the leadership role. Perhaps they feel their husband isn't qualified for the spiritual tasks at hand or that their husbands don't make the "right" decisions, as they should. Either way, the admonition from Proverbs 14:1 says ***"Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."*** Unfortunately, this has been the result too often from wives who think they "know better than God", which brings us back to the garden and Eve's failure to trust God in the midst of a challenge to His Word. Eve thought she "knew better" and we are suffering the results today. Women today with all their education, liberation and elevated status in society think they know better also, but where has it gotten us? Two thirds of all marriages today end in divorce and there are more broken homes and single moms than in the history of this country. Our advanced logic and education hasn't bought us much, we have gone backward.

Marriage is primarily spiritual and, secondarily, physical and also emotional. Since it is spiritual first, God needs to be sought on how to live within the marriage relationship if it is to function as designed. If not, we are left to our own devices and formulas for success. When this is the case, there is danger from the perspective of the wives. There can be a strong tendency to dismantle their families decision by decision, action by action, just as Proverbs warns. Therefore, regardless of the circumstances and capability of the husband, the wife should remain faithful to God in her walk and overall relationship. This is the only means of living "God's way" and trusting God to make the necessary changes in both husband and wife. A husband's disobedient behavior to the Word of God is never an excuse for a wife to "throw in the towel" and go along with him to a destructive end.

We are constantly challenged by the world, the flesh and the devil to rely on our own intellect and limited understanding instead of trusting the guidance of God's Word for our lives. When a wife decides to go her "own way", she takes the road of fools and will end up causing herself and her family unnecessary pain and misery as she destroys her home. For her influence under the nature of sin is that of evil persuasion, but under the power of the Holy Spirit her influence is that she can win her husband over to obedience to God's Word, by her godly behavior and evident trust in the living God.

Finally, the issue of submission has been difficult for many wives, but much of the challenge is based on a "misunderstanding" of what biblical submission is all about. The Greek word for submission according to Thayer's Greek lexicon means: 1) to arrange under, to subordinate, 2) to subject, put in subjection, 3) to subject one's self, obey, 4) to submit to one's control, 5) to yield to one's admonition or advice, and 6) to obey, be subject. I think this gives us a good idea of the intent of the word, no mystery here.

The question is, how does submission work out in everyday living? Does it mean that a wife can't be involved in decisions? Of course not! Does it mean that a wife can't question her husband? Of course not! It isn't the position of an underling with a dictator over them. It should be the position of a wife yielding herself to her husband's leadership because it pleases God. Since God has placed the man in the most "accountable" position, He expects that the wife will support her husband and thereby obey Him. A wise husband and good leader will most certainly confer with his wife on all significant issues in life that will affect them and their family. She should be part of the decision making process, for she is an ***"heir of the grace of life"*** (1 Peter 3:7) and not a child or slave with which information is to be withheld. Even Jesus said to his disciples ***"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."*** (John 15:15). His disciples are the "church – His bride" and husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

If Jesus treats His disciples as friends, should not a husband have his wife as his closest friend on earth? This certainly would fix a lot of broken relationships. Many wives would greatly appreciate the love and caring provision of a godly husband. Unfortunately, in the current time we live, it's not the norm. Therefore, many women must exercise submission to their husbands by faith, since the spiritual benefits of having a godly husband may not be theirs right now to enjoy. God is well aware of the situation and the pressure it creates within the home.

If you find yourself in this place, don't get discouraged, but be encouraged. There are many women in very difficult situations who have come to trust God and take Him at His Word. The result within their families is a tremendous, godly influence on their children and their husband. We would like to encourage you to trust God and allow Him to put your relationship with your husband together as He intended when He ordained marriage. Man didn't create marriage and it doesn't work properly with man alone, God is needed for the relationship within a family to be complete. The statistics of the divorce rate in the world bare this out and the growing statistics in the church among Christians who keep God out of their marriage are revealing similar results.

God's design is simple: obedience to His commands and principles yields success in the marriage relationship. Give God a chance. If things are falling apart today, perhaps that's the best human hands can do. It's time for the Master's Divine touch.

Please read the Ephesians passage and answer the questions below. Read the Ephesians passage for a few days prior to answering the questions. The time and effort you put into understanding and applying the scriptures will yield direct result in your marriage relationship.

WIFE:

Why do you think that Jesus' relationship with the church is used as a parallel for marriage?

Do you understand submission to your husband as defined in this context?

What is the result of a wife submitting to her husband?

Who do you think you're accountable to first when dealing with the subject of submission?

Why?

What is Paul's final statement and the one command to the wife in verse 33?

Do you submit to your husband?

If not, why?

How do you understand God's requirement for you as a wife in submitting to your husband?