

Title: The War for Dependence
Date: October 14, 2018
Subject: Roles and functions of wives and husbands
Scripture: 1 Peter 3:1 - 7

Christ followers are to be different/distinct from those who aren't. The world system is about me as I'm the most important. I have my rights. My needs and wants must be met or there'll be hell to pay. If you wrong me or I think you've wronged me, I'll fight you with words, maybe physically or simply withdraw.

As aliens to this plane of existence, Christ followers' uniqueness shows out in our responses to people as we copy the example of Jesus at his crucifixion. He didn't sin. We aren't to sin. He didn't speak deceitfully. We aren't to speak deceitfully. He didn't retaliate. We aren't to retaliate. He didn't make threats. We aren't to make threats. He endured unjust suffering. We're to endure unjust suffering. He trusted himself to the Father. We're to trust ourselves to the Father. He was an agent of grace. We're to be agents of grace.

These attitudes and actions have been seen in two contexts. Citizens and household servants/workers are given guidance as how to contribute to the orderly function of government and workplace. There's only one king/governor at a time who has the ultimate authority and responsibility. There's only one head boss at a time. There's only one person who is the captain of a ship. There's only one head coach of the football team.

We move to the third arena – the husband and wife relationship for the orderly operation of the home. I used “arena” specifically because sometimes marriage is like an athletic contest in an arena or the ancient arena of the Coliseum. It's improperly viewed as all about winning.

The instructions to wives and husbands are prefaced with “in the same way.” This links the teaching to the previous section. We're to copy Jesus' example of serving. We do what we do for the Lord's sake.

READ 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Frontload by stating these verses aren't saying that wives have to stay in marriages no matter what. There's allowance in the Bible for divorce when adultery is involved. A person doesn't have to live in abusive situations where their lives are in danger. Separation is the wise choice.

You probably noticed the inequity in the amount of material addressed to women and men. Someone might infer it's because men's attention span is shorter, it's all they can handle. Not true.

The principle concern in the marriage relationship is for spiritual well-being. It's not about personal welfare, financial stability or even about the kids. The passage delineates duties for the effective functioning of the home. Husbands aren't commanded to make their wives do what they're supposed to do. Wives aren't commanded to make their husbands do what they're supposed to do. Each is responsible for themselves as they relate to God's instructions. God arranged marriage so the husband is in the role of servant headship with its responsibility and authority.

The wife's role. She's called upon to be submissive just like people are in other relationships. The theme began back in 2:13. READ 13a. Though it isn't expressly stated, Jesus submitted himself to those who would kill him. He provided the example. Human submission starts by offering it to the Lord. It's extended to those in authority -- government, masters and now the marriage relationship.

Here's the definition from two weeks ago. "Submission is an attitude of respect that results in obedience to authority and positive good deeds" (Steven J. Cole). John Piper gives a longer description. "The biblical reality of a wife's submission would take different forms depending on the quality of a husband's leadership. This can be seen best if we define submission not in terms of specific behaviors, but as a *disposition* to yield to the husband's authority and an *inclination* to follow his leadership. This is important to do because no submission of one human being to another is absolute. The husband does not replace Christ as the woman's supreme authority. She must never follow her husband's leadership into sin... But even where a Christian wife may have to stand with Christ against the sinful will of her husband, she can still have a spirit of submission—a disposition to yield. She can show by her attitude and behavior that she does not like resisting his will and that she longs for him to forsake sin and lead in righteousness so that her disposition to honor him as head can again produce harmony" (Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood, p. 47).

If a woman in Peter's day came to Christ and the husband didn't, as often happens today, it could have been viewed as an act of defiance, a societal time bomb. The wife was trying to show that she was better than the husband, that she didn't need him anymore. The counsel is to not add to the explosive situation by being defiant or thinking since she's spiritually free in Christ she's also free from previous human responsibilities.

The teaching isn't just for those with unbelieving husbands. The overall command is to be submissive, but if the husband isn't a Christ follower, here's the way it can impact him. The husband may be won over. It's not a guarantee. The husband may remain clueless and merely think she's trying to be a good wife.

The goal again is spiritual transformation. Usually words are necessary in some way, shape or form to communicate the Gospel of Jesus. In this case, it seems like the husband has heard the good news and has so far rejected it. More words, and just more words would not serve the purpose of leading him to Christ. The wife needs to act in a diplomatic manner. She's like a spy on a secret mission to get the guy into the kingdom.

The aspect that could make the difference is behavior. Practice what's been preached. Be the demonstration of a changed life. The wife is in the best position to serve one up.

Wives are to have wholesome and reverent lives meaning they strive to live lives devoted to God. They seek to build their own connection with God. They don't seek excuses to sin. They're to exhibit a gentle and quiet spirit. This doesn't mean they're mute but they're striving to be a calming influence. Not prone to fussing, fuming, fury or flurry. The wife is in control of her emotions and actions. Act in a loving manner.

Some things that won't move a husband, or anyone for that matter, toward spiritual transformation and well-being: innuendos about the character of the husband, slandering him to others, acting in anger, rolling

eyes, loud and abrasive diatribes aimed at him, argumentativeness, guilt, brow beating, nagging and always talking about the husband's need to get saved. The pushiness can result in pushing away.

Elisabeth K. Corcoran's 19 year marriage and her family were torn apart by divorce, partly by her husband's faults, but also partly by her faults. She listed some of her failures: "I yelled...a lot. I looked out for "number one" and tried to protect me. I was cruel and self-serving and critical with my words. Probably daily. I didn't serve my then-husband enough. I didn't build him up enough. I didn't respect him. I used to argue that once I felt he deserved respect, I'd begin to respect him." Those approaches of the world didn't work.

The wife's focus is to be on her inner person. That's where true beauty comes from. The Lord judges on the inside not the outward appearance. The warning about focusing on the external is about going to extremes. "Beautiful" women of ancient times would resort to exotic, over the top hairstyles and use garishly extravagant jewelry and clothes to display their wealth. It was fueled a desire to show off.

Chuck Swindoll put his foot in his mouth when preaching on this text. He told the congregation, "Some of you women need help with your appearance. You really do." Then he doubled down by amplifying what he'd said. I'll bet he heard about it when he got home. A country preacher showed more wisdom. He was fond of saying, "A little paint on the barn doesn't do any harm." The idea is to not let the outer take so much time that there's none left for the inner. Pursue the inner first.

Saints from the past and specifically Sarah, Abraham's wife, are appealed to as examples. They put their hope in God, making them beautiful to God and others. They submitted to their husbands. Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him "master" or lord (not Lord). Steven Cole shares a related story and comment, "I heard of a wife who fell into bed and exclaimed, "Lord, I'm tired!" Her husband calmly said, "My dear, in the privacy of our own bedroom, you can call me Jim." Proper submission doesn't require addressing your husband as lord. But the principle is, submission is reflected by your speech. The tone of your voice and the words you speak reflect whether you respect your husband and are in submission to him, or whether you're in a power struggle against him" (bible.org/seriespage/lesson-14-living-difficult-husband-1-peter-31-6).

A woman wrote Tech Support: "Last year I upgraded from Boyfriend to Husband and I noticed a distinct slowdown in overall system performance, particularly in the flower and jewelry applications. In addition, Husband uninstalled valuable programs such as Romance and Personal Attention, and then installed undesirable programs such as Newspaper, TV News and Basketball Games. Conversation no longer runs. Please note that I've tried running Nagging to fix these problems, but to no avail. What can I do?"

Tech Support responded, "Boyfriend is an Entertainment Package while Husband is an older more reliable operating system. Please enter command: `ithoughtyoulovedme.html` and try to download Tears. And don't forget to install the Guilt update. If those applications work as designed, Husband should then automatically run the applications Jewelry and Flowers. Overuse of the above applications can cause Husband to default to Silence, Happy Hour or Hobbies. Whatever you do, DO NOT under any circumstances install Mother-In-Law. It runs a virus in the background that will eventually seize control of all your system resources.

In summary, Husband is a decent program, but it does have limited memory and cannot learn new applications quickly. You might consider buying additional software to improve memory & performance. We recommend: Cooking, Hot Looks and Manipulation.” Sounds like what happens all too often.

A Hindu woman converted to Christ chiefly by hearing the Word of God read. She suffered lots of persecution from her husband. A missionary asked her, “When your husband is angry and persecutes you, what do you do?” She replied: “Well, sir, I cook his food better; when he complains, I sweep the floor cleaner; and when he speaks unkindly, I answer him mildly. I try to show him that when I became a Christian, I became a better wife and a better mother.”

The call is to do what is right and to trust the Lord. The bottom line question for wives: Does my life – actions and words, both said and left unsaid, make my husband want to follow the Lord or do they make him pull away?

The husband. The directive again begins with “in the same way” -- in the same way Jesus responded to those who crucified Him -- not sinning against her, not retaliating against her, not making threats against her, trusting self to your Father who judges justly. Ephesians 5:25 reminds us that Christ gave himself up for the church and the husbands are to love their wives just as Christ did – in the same way.

The goal for the husband varies from that of the wife though it’s still about spiritual well-being. Her goal is to impact her husband and by extension herself. The husband’s goal is about himself and by extension his wife. His goal isn’t the proverbial “happy wife, happy life.” It’s more “happy wife, good prayer life.”

The goal is the quality of the husband’s relationship with the Lord. It’s affected by the way he treats his wife. Men can throw up big roadblocks to their fellowship with God. The way to prevent interference is for the husband to treat his wife with consideration, respect and as a co-heir of salvation.

Wives in the ancient world were viewed as property. They could be discarded on a whim. Men had the freedom to do pretty much whatever they wanted. The little woman at home was merely there as a convenience, a baby factory, a person to meet his needs. She didn’t venture out. He could and did have mistresses.

This changed for Christ followers. They obviously weren’t to have mistresses. They also weren’t to spend all their energy outside the home. They were to focus on this God-given relationship they had with their wife. Spend time there, not just as a pit stop to refuel and kick the tires. They were to live with their wives.

The husband is to keep in mind that his wife is weaker. The weakness isn’t spiritual. There’s no spiritual difference positionally among people when they’re in Christ. All are saved through the same means, through Christ. There’s no difference in the spiritual standing of an emperor and subject though they have different roles and functions. No difference spiritually between a master and a servant though they have different roles and functions. No spiritual difference between husbands and wives though they have different complementary and dependent roles and functions. Husbands and wives, men and women, are coheirs in all that the Lord has in store for his children. They have the same of personhood before God. The weakness also isn’t that the wife

has a diminished mental capacity, or is morally inferior or possesses lesser strength of character. It has to do with the physical. Men have more muscle mass and gross-muscle movements which means more strength.

The husband is called to be a protector, a considerate, loving leader. Not run rough shod over her. They aren't to be brutes and forcefully impose their will on their wives. Treat her as a person with hopes and dreams and ideas. Respect means not calling the wife the "old ball and chain" or "old lady" when talking with co-workers. It means not making fun of her cooking in front of family. It means not treating her ideas as if they came from someone who is braindead. It means expressing appreciation to them and for them when in the company of others. Jean.....

Wayne Grudem is regarded as one of the foremost thinkers in the evangelical world. He writes about "mutual submission" within marriage... husbands and wives are to be thoughtful and considerate toward one another and put each other's interests and preferences before their own... "Mutual submission" would then mean that the husband is to be unselfish in his exercise of leadership in the family and the wife is to be unselfish in her submission to and support of that leadership... There is "mutual submission" in *some* senses in marriage, but not in *all* senses, because the wife still has to submit to her husband's authority and leadership in a way that the husband does not have to—indeed, *should not*—submit to his wife's authority or leadership. He has a unique leadership role in the family that he should not abdicate. Submission does not mean putting a husband in the place of Christ. Submission does not mean giving up independent thought. Submission does not mean a wife should give up efforts to influence and guide her husband. Submission does not mean a wife should give in to every demand of her husband... Considerate leadership does not mean harsh or domineering use of authority... Considerate leadership does not mean always giving in to a wife's wishes."

I think it's only fair to let Chuck Swindoll try to dig himself out of the hole. "When grace awakens in a husband's heart, he cares for the one God gave him and he becomes increasingly aware of her value, her gifts, and her significance... The more I become acquainted with the grace of God, the more I want to model servanthood, the more I desire to affirm and release my wife—the less I want to dominate and control her. Grace loves and serves, it gives and forgives" (The Grace Awakening, p. 249).

A man made a vow to try to be a loving, giving, unselfish husband for the family's two week vacation. He worked hard at noticing his wife, attending to her needs, doing what she wanted, even if he really rather would've done something else. It went great. Toward the end of the time, he made a new vow to keep on choosing to love his wife like this. But on the last night of the vacation, his wife was obviously upset. Finally she blurted, "Tom, do you know something I don't?" "What do you mean?" "Well ... that checkup I had several weeks ago ... our doctor ... did he tell you something about me? Tom, you've been so good to me ... am I dying?" It took a moment for it all to sink in. Tom burst out laughing, took her in his arms, and said, "No, honey, you're not dying; I'm just starting to live." (Tom Anderson, How Love Came Back, *Reader's Digest* [10/86], 129-130).

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