

# Husbands & Wives



In this chapter, we will be discussing the roles of husbands and wives. But this will not be a discussion of the division of work or types of jobs as distributed between spouses. We will explore the spiritual roles as described in scripture and endeavor to discover the heart of God in His separation of the sexes.

At first glance this may appear to be both old fashioned and sexist.<sup>1</sup> It is neither. Exploring marital roles is an exploration of the biblical parameters set by the Spirit of God, not for domination or classification, but rather for the joy of fulfilling the nature and purposes in the heart of God for His beloved children. It is God who divided the sexes and thus differentiated between the two. But it is also the Spirit of God which inspired the Apostle Paul to write, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” (Galatians 3:28)

Paul was not saying that there are no Jews or Greeks in the body of Christ. Likewise he was not saying there were no slaves or free (or why would he have encouraged Philemon to receive back Onesimus, his runaway slave), male or female. There are indeed such people. But the distinction offers no class privilege in the Body of Christ nor as heirs of the promise.

---

1. Sexist and sexism is defined as “prejudice or discrimination based on sex” (The New Britannica-Webster Dictionary & Reference Guide, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1986), as opposed to the cultural usage of differentiating between the sexes.

## Husbands Love Your Wives

Such a simple command, and yet so overlooked even among Christians. The scripture does not use the word for affection or fondness<sup>1</sup>, nor does it use the word for desire<sup>2</sup>, or even sexual intimacy and arousal.<sup>3</sup> Instead, Paul used the word to describe what proceeds from the nature and character of God: *agapeo*.

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.”*  
Ephesians 5: 25-29 (NKJV)

Agapeo (the verb) along with agape (the noun form) represent a love which is a conscious decision to honor, esteem, nurture and cherish. It is an action of placing high value upon someone. It is not moved by the ebb and flow of emotion. Instead, as a decision, it can add stability to the emotional and volatile feelings that are a part of living. It is this word that Paul, by the Spirit, used in Ephesians 5. Husbands, love — *act consciously to cherish, honor and esteem, in as selfless manner*<sup>4</sup> — your wives,...

Here is a descriptive list of agape’s behavior:

1. Longsuffering, patient, forbearing. Literally, it means long-tempered.<sup>5</sup>
2. Kind, pleasant and gracious.<sup>6</sup>
3. Does not envy.
4. Does not parade itself or is puffed up.
5. It is not rude.
6. Not self-seeking.
7. Not sharp, sarcastic or provoking.
8. Not evil thinking or rejoicing in sin
9. Weathers every challenge against it and endures.

1. *Phileo* = affection or fondness. Describes an emotion of feeling: often a shared state.

2. *Thelo* = a wish or a desire. Translated love only in Mark 12:38, where the RV renders it “desire”.

3. *Eros* = in Greek literature the term for erotic or sexual “love”.

4. See I Corinthians 13

5. *Makrothumeo* = *makro*, long + *thumeo*, temper or anger

6. *Chesteuomai* = gracious (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of The New Testament, MacDonald Publishing Co.*)

7. *Paroxuno* = to sharpen, provoke

We have heard and may even have said the words, “love, honor and cherish” but have not understood the importance of them. This is God’s decision toward us. He honors, cherishes, nourishes and holds us in high esteem. In turn, husbands are admonished to love their wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. Christ did this as a demonstration of His high value of His church, His called-out ones, His body.

The text in Ephesians goes on to say that Christ, in giving Himself for His church, sanctified and cleansed her in order to present her to Himself as a glorious church, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing. This is not to say that the husband sanctifies and cleanses the wife. What it does indicate is the high value placed on the church by Christ Jesus and the caliber of honor and esteem that the husband can bestow on his wife.

*“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*  
*1 John 4:10 (NKJV)*

As the spouse is compelled by scripture to *agape*, the husband has a unique opportunity to exhibit Christ-like character. In the Kingdom, love is the source from which all other activity flows. The husband’s love for his wife, that decision to value and esteem her, becomes the source for all the rest of his behavior toward her. When the husband loves his wife, the nature and character of Christ begins to work in and through the marriage.

- ♥ Love is pre-eminent in all things “Christian”.
- ♥ Love makes the way for union and unity.
- ♥ The headship of Christ..... Protects.
- ♥ The headship of Christ..... Provides.
- ♥ The headship of Christ..... Leads & Guides.
- ♥ The headship of Christ..... Redeems.
- ♥ The headship of Christ..... Heals.
- ♥ The headship of Christ..... Serves.
- ♥ The headship of Christ..... Establishes Peace.

Ephesians 4:23 says that the husband is the head of the wife **AS** Christ is the head of the church. It is in this context of love that headship can be observed. The church’s relationship with Christ is voluntary. We have chosen to receive His love and His headship. Christ’s relationship is based on His love for us. It is not His nature to dominate people against their will.

## The Wife As Cooperative Partner

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” What a hot potato of spiritual and cultural incorrectness. Wives, and women in general, have been abused and held in bondage by the misuse and misapplication of this scripture. Several point to consider:

1. Submit means to yield. And this, in a cooperative manner, since in Christ we are speaking of two peers of equal worth.
2. Your own husband indicated that women are not subject to men in general. Wives are to come into cooperative agreement with their own husbands, because it is a partnership.
3. As to the Lord: when the husband stands in a Christ-like manner, he should receive the yielding of his wife in the same way Christ would receive the yielding of his church.

*“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”* Ephesians 5:22-24 (NKJV)

The scripture says the husband is head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church. This headship is in the same manner as Christ’s. Paul uses the word head, in I Corinthians 11:3 to denote relationship between Christ and believer, the Father and Christ and the woman (wife) to the man (her husband). It is a relationship word, not a qualitative word.

More than anything, the husband’s headship indicates his great responsibility before God to have the character and depth of relationship that is worthy of his being asked to lead, and a wife who can trust that leadership enough to yield in cooperation.

In Christ, two equal people agree to marriage. There is not one inferior spouse and one superior. Two equal believers come together as partners and co-laborers. Christ offers His esteem and honor, provision, protection and safety; we respond and yield to His offer. In the same manner, the husband offers his esteem and honor, provision, protection and safety. As the bride responds, a partnership is formed. The believer is invited into a living prophecy and demonstration of Christ’s relationship with His church. What an awesome privilege to live something heavenly and eternal in nature, right here and right now.

## A Help Meet

So there is Adam. Freshly formed from the dust of the earth and placed in a garden created for him. But God decides that it is not good for him to be alone. He devises a plan to have Adam desire a spouse. Perhaps God knew that man would want a wife if it was his own idea. So God paraded all the animals and birds before him that he would name them. And he did. He named every living creature, but for Adam there was found no help meet <sup>KJV</sup> (or helper comparable <sup>NKJV</sup>). In both cases, this is really one Hebrew word עֵזֶר or eyzer, from the prime root azar: to surround, thus to aid or help.

Now while Adam may have realized that there was no one to put their loving arms around him and encompass him with their strength and support, I don't think that is the mental image behind eyzer. He had just seen all the animals of creation brought before him and he realizes there is no female of his species. I believe the word eyzer reflects the biologically obvious. There was no one like him, equipped like other females of other species to enclose and surround him. God caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam so that He could remove a rib and form woman from that tissue He had removed; not something new from the dust, but out of Adam's own substance. God made woman from man and presented her to him as his surrounding aid.

## THE BIOLOGICAL PICTURE

*“For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,...Romans 1:20a (KJV)*

Before the fall, Adam tended the garden that God had planted. After the fall Adam tilled the ground for himself. Biologically Adam was created to plant seed and Eve designed to receive it. The invisible, yet-to-be-revealed plan of God was made visible in the design of Adam and his wife — *“male and female, created He them”*. More than a mere sexual convenience and of higher value than an incubator, Eve was the partner that put flesh on the vision. Reconciliation is promised through her, her seed, The Seed. And women today still have the awesome task of putting flesh on their husbands future. Not just in the biological, but in the spiritual as well. A wife can make her husband's dreams come into reality. She is his perfect complement and counterpart; able to surround and aid; able to hold and nurture; able to incubate and make tangible.



## **Other Vital Functions**

This is not meant to be a job description. It is designed as a spiritual guideline to help point in the right direction. It is spiritual in nature, therefore subjective in design.

<b>HUSBAND</b>	<b>WIFE</b>
Protector	Intercessor
• Safety	• Discerns
• Deliverance	• Upholds
• Healing	Administrator
Provider	• Multiplies
Priest	• Sets Order
	• Sets Pace
	Caretaker
	Temple

## **SUMMARY**

The roles of husband and wife are not rigid structures intended to create bondage and legalism. Nor are they whimsical parts to be performed by actors. They are ministry functions to be entered into as a lifestyle. God has given grace so that each spouse may enter into their ministry role for one another and the family, under His direction and guidance. Each spouse is responsible to help the other fulfill their part through encouragement and sharing. Each partner brings into the covenant strengths and weaknesses, not to be exalted or corrected, but to be shared: one filling in the other's missing parts.

## **REPENTANCE PRAYER**

Merciful Father, I acknowledge that I have failed to be all that You have commanded and desire for me to be. I acknowledge my selfishness and short sightedness. I have not considered others around me, my family, or the future. I have not practiced your Word; whether through ignorance or by disobedience, I have sinned. Forgive and change me. Holy Spirit, keep me ever mindful of my responsibility to be an example of Your Grace and intent for others. By Your Grace, allow me to step into the ministry role You have designed for me. Help me to be a loving servant and an example of Christ. Amen.