

The Gospel According to Marriage Part IV: An Excellent Wife...Far More Precious Than Jewels” Ephesians 5:21-23; 1 Peter 2:13 - 3:6

“An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.” Prov.31:10

In the Beginning...

- God said that it was not good for a man to be alone. Alone in the Hebrew is pronounced "bad" in English! God was really wanting to get His point across!
- The word either referred to the aide needed for a disconnected limb, or a carrying stick like those used by Joshua and Caleb when they came back from the promised land loaded down with fruit carried on a stick that needed to be shouldered by both. *In other words, God intends for a marriage to bear fruit for him and the husband is a cripple to try to bear fruit alone.* He needs someone else on the other side of the stick!

➤ He Needs Help!

- God said that he needed a help-meet (this is not Hebrew for doormat or chief cook and bottle washer!) The Hebrew phrase for help-meet literally means:

To Help:

To Rescue... Especially in the area of discernment.

To Reflect... One who is looking at the same thing as you but sees it from a different angle and is called to provide the information in a manner that advances God's purpose for the couple. Another part in this definition is that she was to reflect his love for God.

To Remind..The word helper is often used of God Himself! The wife's life reminds the husband that the Lord is His strength.

- Adam's God-given instruction was to: 1) tend the field (i.e. to bring back a harvest from the same dirt He was raised out from and in like fashion nurture and 2) cherish his wife as a witness of God's love for man. *Eve's orientation was to stand with Adam in such a way that He was inspired to fulfill the call that God had placed upon his life and in so doing, show the world the joy of being in a loving union with God through her marriage.*
- The Hebrew terms for Help-meet along with an understanding of why it was not good for man to be alone, lay the foundation for a Biblical understanding of the wife's role in marriage of submission and respect.
- *In the past few days, how have you helped **rescue, reflect or remind** your husband of God's wisdom, love, and strength?*

Biblical Submission With a View To Christ

- Just as Christ is the model that helps a husband understand love and sacrifice, so Christ is the model for the wife to understand submission and respect.
- **When did submission begin?** Its timeless...it is not primarily about earthly relationships, but a heavenly relationship between Father and Son and the joy and beauty of their love for one another.
- Christ did not regard His equality with God as something to be held onto in a selfish way...He did not claim His personal rights as a co-equal member of the Trinity. Instead, He humbled Himself and gladly submitted to God the Father to fulfill His role as God the Son. Have you ever heard a Christian question the beauty of Christ's submission to God or believe that Christ was in any way demeaned, insulted, or inferior? In fact just the opposite is true. We praise Christ for His submission to God to fulfill His role as our Savior and Lord! This is the beauty of Biblical submission and why the Bible describes a submitted wife with the same terminology of beauty and virtue that it does Christ.
- The topic of a wife's call to submit and respect her husband has often been the source of much conflict and debate. Yet, the topic of submission is only uncomfortable to the degree that it is not Biblically understood...it is seen in the scriptures as one of the most attractive qualities of a Christian...both male and female.

I) Submission Explained

A) What submission is not:

- *It is not* putting a husband in the place of Christ.
- *It is not* giving up independent thought.
- *It is not* giving up the important role of influence in helping to guide a family.
- *It does not* mean that you agree to submit if doing so causes you to commit sin.
- *It does not* mean one has lesser intelligence or competence or worth.
- *It is not* being fearful or timid.
- *It does not* mean inferior in personhood or spirituality. Wayne Grudem

B) What Submission is:

- The topic of submission is used over 40 times in the New Testament and the theme is applicable to both men and women.
- It is used of recognizing God given positions of authority. It means to voluntarily place oneself under authority in honor of God's love and purposes. It was used to describe one who would voluntarily submit, as under military command. All the while, remembering that his/her immediate leader is also subject to being under authority.
- But, do we really need an understanding of Greek to know the basic meaning of scripture? What do you do when you see those pretty red/blue lights flashing in your rear view mirror...you know what it means to submit! If you receive a summons to jury duty or are subpoenaed for a testimony...you know what it means to submit. **We even know what it means**

to submit if the officer that is writing us the ticket is not very respectable...maybe he is blowing cigarette smoke in your face, or finishing his lunch, or purposely moving slow to annoy you. What do we do...tear up the ticket because he does not deserve our respect? Nope. We accept the ticket because we know that even if this authority figure is not being respectable, we have to answer to a governmental authority above him!

- It is interesting that every passage in the New Testament that deals with a wife's relationship with her husband makes some mention of the need for submission.

A Definition of Submission:

Submission refers to a wife's divine calling to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts. It is not an absolute surrender of her will. Rather, we speak of her disposition to yield to her husband's guidance and her inclination to follow his leadership. Christ is her absolute authority... She submits "out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). The supreme authority of Christ qualifies the authority of her husband. The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

Define Biblical submission in your own words:

II) Submission Exalted (In Christ, In a Husband, In a Wife) - 1 Peter 2:13 - 3:6

A) The Four Most Important Words...Chapter 3:1

- ***"In the same way..."***
- The topic of a wife's submission to her husband is raised, but it is only raised in reference to a view to Christ. He is our loving model and compelling reason for obedience.
- **(Please note...the passage describes Christ's submission to God, the wife's submission to her husband, and in verse 7 those same four important words come up "in the same way" ...only now the issue is the husband's submission to Christ.)**
- *"in the same way", points us back to not only the illustration of Christ's submission, but also that of a servant's submission to his master. Note what was required of the slave's submission...the slave was not told to submit if the master was qualified as a good master or if the master deserved the respect, or if he was reasonable. He was required to submit to both good and harsh masters...as long as those masters were not requiring the slave to sin against God and conscience.*
- *And the wives are called, in the same way, to submit to husbands...even those disobedient to the word. The submission to the husband was not based on his qualifications or his character, whether he was a good leader or a bad leader. She was simply called to submit in imitation of Christ, for the glory of God, and for God to use her influence under authority to accomplish His divine purposes.*

B) The Most Important Motivation...

Chapter 2:13...***submit yourselves for the Lord's sake*** to every human institution..."

Chapter 2:19...***God grants favor/grace to the submitted servant when his/her submission is for the sake of conscience toward God***

Chapter 3:4...submission and its qualities of a gentle and quiet spirit **"are precious in the sight of God"**

- Again, we find the importance of asking the "why" question. Why submit? For the Lord's sake, for the sake of conscience toward God, because it is precious in His sight...*because it is what Christ did for us.*
- When it is done for Christ and His glory and to fulfill your calling to portray a church submitted to Christ, it empowers you to respect your husband even when he is not very respectable.
- Chapter 3:1-2 gives you one additional motivation...***your submission carries spiritual authority!*** *"be submissive to your husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives!"* God will use your submission as a means of grace in His working in your husband's life. In a unique way, your submission actually frees your husband to be the leader he was called to be. It puts him in a position of feeling the weight and need for him to pursue glorifying God as a leader. *A husband has been given power by God in his position of leadership, a wife has been given power by God in her position of influence.* Remember what godly influence Queen Esther had on King Xerxes? Thousands of Jews were saved, thanks to her powerful position under the authority of her husband.
- ***"When a wife submits to her husband as unto the Lord, she is not destroying or subverting her authority in the home, she is establishing it. When a woman tries to undermine her husband's position in order to become "boss" of the family, she is cutting off her own strength and weakening her position in the home. Roy Lessin***
- Are you coming to his rescue to reflect the angles he needs to see? Are you coming with words alone that are mainly devoid of actions? This passage is not advocating that you become speechless...it is simply noting that your words should be the icing on the cake of your behavior.
- Are you God-conscious in your respect of your husband?
- If your eyes have been more focused on your husband's deficiencies, this should be a lesson that inspires great hope for you as God is calling your eyes away from his weaknesses to feast upon Christ's perfections.
- *Think of whatever challenge you are facing right now in your relationship...are you more aware of pleasing God through this difficulty, or are you more aware of your husband's deficiencies and the hardship it is causing you?*

C) The Most Important Example...

You are not alone in this calling. Consider Christ...*"For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered (in His submission) for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." 1 Pet.2:21-23*

- What kind of example did He leave us? He submitted to the authorities in His crucifixion with His eyes on God...even though those authorities were not deserving. Submission is not always easy...yet in it ***"He committed no sin, nor was there any deceit in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return, while suffering He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."***

- **"We can put this down as bedrock truth that God will never allow any action against you that is not in accord with His will for you and His will for you will always be for your good."** Jerry Bridges
- *Are there any ways that you have hindered showing respect for your husband through any deceit (financial, communication, implications)? Have you reviled him when he sins against you or forgive him? Do you utter threats or seek God's wisdom in being reconciled? Do you trust the One who judges righteously?*

D) The Most Important Beauty...

"that they observe your chaste and respectful behavior...not merely external adornment...but the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" 1 Pet. 3:2-4

- Scripture is noting that your beauty and desirableness will increase in your husband's eyes through a gentle and quiet spirit. Through your respectful behavior. A gentle and quiet spirit does not mean literally quiet, but someone who is under the control of the Holy Spirit and guarded by His peace.
- This beauty will not only be attractive to your husband, your children, your neighbors, etc. will all be seeing your trust in God as you show respect for your husband and the favor He is granting you as a result.

E) The Most Important Hope...

"For in this same way, in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham..."

- To live this kind of life, ***your hope has to be in your God and not your husband.***
- Remember, your husband cannot meet the need of your heart for eternal love...only Christ can give you that. *Even a great husband makes a poor savior!*
- Submission to your husband does not mean dependence upon him, but upon God! To be dependent upon someone only works effectively when the one you depend upon is fully dependable...which rules out people...and husbands are people! This kind of need to depend on someone casts us back upon God!
- ***Depending upon people/husbands can actually promote the cultivation of your own bitterness as you find yourself disappointed or rejected or angry about something he failed to do or be.*** This is when thoughts need to be taken captive...thoughts like..."I deserve better...after all I have done for you...I should have done it myself, or I could have done it better" etc.

The Downward Spiral of Disappointed Desire:

4:1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. James 4:1-2

Desire ("I Want It") ► *Demand* ("I Must Have It") ► *Need* ("I Will Have It") ►

Expectation ("You Should Help Me Get It") ► *Disappointment* ("You Failed Me") ►

Punishment ("Because You Didn't, I Will Retaliate...")

- Sarah is noted as the female role model in this passage. Remember, Peter is talking to wives going through a very hard time...persecution was rampant and husbands were tempted to compromise or abandon their faith to avoid conflict or making decisions for the family that the wives did not agree with. Seems like Sarah went through something like that.
- Sometimes it is easier to aspire to someone else's strengths when you are aware of their weaknesses. It is easy to read the Bible at times with the thought that it is only talking about spiritual superstars that were always strong, etc. ***Well, Sarah was not a spiritual superstar...***
- Before Sarah's name was changed through covenant with the Lord, her name was Sarai. Sarai means... contention! Contention defined means: strife, dispute, controversy, quarrel, rivalry, wrangling, constantly affecting irritation, and loves to argue. Often, children were named according to their character as they waited a while to watch what their child was like before naming him/her.
- Sarai lived up to her name...she was jealous, manipulative..think of how she treated Hagar (and it was her idea that Abram sleep with her!)
- Through her covenant union with God, God changed her character and her name. Sarah means "Princess"...she was a princess under the transforming love of the King of Kings. According to our verses, this change of names also brought about a gentle and quiet spirit...a woman precious in God's sight...a woman who hoped in God.
- This should be a beacon of hope to all of us...God changes peoples lives in such a fashion that they enjoy living for their calling and purpose. If He can do it for Sarah, He can do it for you and I.
- Sarah went from showing contention to showing respect...to esteeming his God given role as leader. *Respect is not an emotional state or feeling...it is something you do because you are conscious of God.* It means to show honor or esteem for, to consider or treat with deference or courtesy, to show consideration for.
- What you will find, as you hope in the Lord and respect your husband...that the more you respect him, the more you will find to respect about him! *"Obedience to God's Word is the opener of eyes" George Macdonald*

F) The Most Important Don't...

"...calling him lord, and you have become her daughters if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear" 1 Pet.3:6

- ***Don't be afraid!*** Fear of the circumstances surrounding your marriage, fear of failure, or fear that your husband won't be affected by your submission are all temptations we must fight.
- Like Peter, we cannot take our eyes off of Christ and look at the wind and the sea...we will do the same thing Peter did...we will sink into despair, bitterness, complacency. When we cease from doing what is right in God's sight, we actually make the problem worse...there was the existing circumstance and now on top of that is my sin of disobedience.
- *"Don't you think God is sovereign enough to swallow up all your mistakes to the greater purpose of His will?"* Bryn Jones

Application:

Tangible ways of showing respect:

- Develop a Biblical view of your husband...your view of him affects the way you relate to him! If you view him merely as your companion or your provider, it will affect your response to him in contrast with your seeing him as your God given head.
- Do not speak negatively about him to others...your husband should never be concerned about what you are communicating to others about him. He should be able to fully trust you in that area. If you must speak to someone about a situation in your marriage, first seek to make yourself accountable for personal change. Second, if there is a sin issue in your husband's life that he is refusing to deal with, in accordance with scripture seek out your pastor/spiritually mature friend of his and seek help for him. Only speak to someone he has relationship with and knows that the individual cares for him. You are not out to shame him, but help him grow.
- Do not seek counsel from others before you have asked for his thoughts.
- Listen attentively to him. People's estimation of your husband should always be going up...and that will be facilitated by your listening to him and paying attention to him. Your attitude about him communicates to them that they should think highly of him too. *If you don't listen to him, why should anyone else?*
- Find concrete ways to verbally communicate what you appreciate about him. Write him a letter, have a quiet dinner...fill the time with what you admire about him. God has designed your husband to be propelled into greater and more godly leadership of your home by being respected and He has designed the wife to be the richest and primary source of that respect.
- Where have you been so busy with the demands or pressures of life...that you have neglected your relationship with your husband?
- Have the demands of motherhood caused you to give your husband the left over crumbs of your day?

Session 4

- When was the last time you did something uniquely special to communicate your love to your husband in a way that he would appreciate?

Ladies, may you take your stand with Sarah and for the sake of the Lord, put your hope in God. He will strengthen you to fulfill your role as godly wives so that the world can see a picture of the church in its joyful relationship with the Lord Jesus.