Marriage Enrichment



Lesson Topic: Roles & Responsibilities

Week One Homework

The husband’s essential **role** in marriage is to *lead* his wife whereas the wife’s essential **role** in marriage is to be her husband’s *helper*. The primary **responsibilities** that a husband has in his role as leader is to *love***,** *understand* and *honor* his wife. The primary **responsibilities** that a wife has in her role as helper are *respect* and *submission* to her husband. As a husband lovingly leads and honors his wife with understanding, the wife’s response is to respect and submit to her husband. As a wife respectfully submits to her husband, his response is to love, understand and honor her. As each spouse carries out their responsibilities in fulfilling their God-given role, they are encouraged in their response.

The homework for this week will help you understand the ways that God has established for husbands to fulfill their role as a loving Servant-Leader and for wives to fulfill their role as a capable Helper-Suitable who is respectfully submissive to her husband.

**Scripture Memory Verse**

“However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” (Ephesians 5:33 ESV):

The memory verse shows that a husband’s love and a wife’s respect are unconditional commands and are responsibilities in marriage. Neither a husband’s love nor a wife’s respect are to be “earned” just as Christ’s love for us and His church is unconditional.

**In the Word Together:**

Read the following scripture with your spouse. What do these verses support tell you about how you are to view your roles & responsibilities in your marriage and what are you called to do to enable and encourage your spouse in his/her roles & responsibilities in your marriage?

1. Genesis 2:18

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1. 1 Corinthians 11:3 and 11:8-9

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1. Titus 2:3-5

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1. 1 Peter 3:1-2 and 1 Peter 3:7

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**Talk About It Together:**

Please discuss the questions below with your spouse and write down your shared responses. You will be sharing your responses to questions 2, 4, 6, 7 during the men’s & women’s breakout time. Remember to be a safe place for your spouse to express his/her thoughts – especially for these emotional topics.

Biblical roles in marriage are a living image of **God’s design for marriage:**

* The marriage relationship serves as a “living picture” of the Gospel, conveying the truth about the Church’s spiritual marriage to Christ.
* The husband is the “head” of his wife (I Cor. 11:3) just as Christ is the head of the Church.
* The wife is the “body” of her husband (Eph. 5:28-31) just as the Church is the body of Christ.
* The husband is called to love and serve his wife and the wife is called to respect and submit to her husband. (Eph.5:21-33, Col. 3:18-19, I Peter 3:1-2; 3:7)

**The Husband’s Role & Responsibilities:**

The husband’s role is to be a loving “**Servant-Leader”** for his wife following the example of Christ. The husband is called to lovingly lead (be the head of) his wife as Christ is the head of the church. A husband is to lead his wife in pursuing their oneness and becoming more like Jesus Christ in every area of their lives. Just like Christ’s love, a husband’s love is to be willful (not based on his wife’s actions), discerning (knowing what is best for his wife and family), and sacrificial (unselfishly putting the needs of his wife and family before his own with no strings attached. Being a Servant-Leader means he is using his role to advance the well-being of his wife and family and denying himself for the good of his wife and family. A husband needs to initiate discussion and leadership in all of the different areas of marriage and to listen to the input, opinions and counsel of his wife with an open mind, being cautious in going against her insight.

Biblical leadership is not being a dictator, passive, or a lone ranger without collaboration from his wife or the wise counsel from others. Leading goes beyond being a provider for the family. Some of the practical ways that a husband can be a loving Servant-Leader are:

* Spiritually: Initiate spiritual growth opportunities in the family: pray and study the Word together, attend church and small group regularly together, take opportunities to serve at church together. Support her in whatever ministry the Lord has her or both of you serving. Is your wife more like Jesus Christ under your leadership than when she was on the day you got married?
  + - Financial: Strive to provide an income capable of supporting the family. Initiate discussions about your finances including your budget, the use of credit cards etc. to determine the proper use of your family’s finances. Place your wife and family’s desires above your own with your spending habits.
    - Relationally: Be her best friend. Lead to resolve conflict in a biblical way that honors God. Be the first to admit you are wrong and ask for forgiveness. Do not let conflict go unresolved. Initiate getting wise counsel from others to help resolve conflict, make important decisions and obtain guidance in other issues. Revealing yourself to your wife and being a safe place for her to reveal herself.
* Home Life . Initiate discussions about having children – how many, how will they be raised, how will they disciplined, schooled etc. Read books together and have discussions to be on the same page about these issues. Initiate discussions about household responsibilities and work as a team.
* Decisions: As a reflection of Christ’s headship, assume final responsibility for major decisions within the family, but always do what is best for your wife and family.

In fulfilling his role as the Servant-Leader the husband has the responsibility to love, understand, honor and prioritize his wife.

* Understand her: Live with your wife “in an understanding way” (1 Peter 3:7). Be a student of her. Spend time with her, listen to her, talk with her and pray with her. Know her better than anyone else knows her.
* Honor her for who she is and the role that God has called her to do. She is an equal in the marriage – treat her that way. Give her equal treatment for things that you do together so that you do what she wants to do as much as you do what you want to do. In non-essential issues, defer to your wife and family’s preferences; allow significant freedom in decision making, following the example of Christ. Cherish her physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Give her lots of affirmation. Express your love with words of affirmation, appreciation, encouragement and affection. Model that respect and honor for her in front of your children and others. Be gentle with her and not demanding or forceful.
  + - Prioritize her: “so that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). Your relationship with the Lord is impacted by your relationship with your wife. Be the husband God has called you to be to have a growing relationship with the Lord.

**Husbands, ask your wife the following four questions [Wives: Please be gentle and gracious with how you answer these vulnerable questions from your husband]:**

1. Referring to the above list as a guide, what are some of the ways or areas that I am leading us well in our marriage?

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1. Is there something new that I can do or something that I can do better as the leader in our marriage?

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1. What are some examples of things that you think that I understand about you well? What can I do to grow in my understanding of you about these things?

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1. Do you feel honored and cherished? Please give me some examples of things that I do well to have you feel honored and cherished and something that I could be better at or grow in.

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**The Wife’s Role and Responsibilites:**

The role of the wife is to to follow the example of the Church and be a “**Helper-Suitable**” for her husband (from Genesis 2:18) – to be like him and equal to him, yet carry out a different role and function in a marriage. The term helper is not demeaning. God refers to himself in Psalm 54:4 as “God is my helper.” The Holy Spirit is referred to as “another helper” in John 14:16. Only God can truly complete each of us, but the wife is to come alongside her husband and help/assist in any way that she can for him in order to accomplish what God has called him to do. Being a helper means she helps her husband fulfill his calling as an image bearer of God, while supporting him in bringing godly leadership to the family. Defer to your husband’s decisions out of reverence for Christ. Deferring to his leadership should be the deference of an informed intelligent advisor. Some of the practical ways/areas that a wife can come alongside her husband and help him are:

* + - Relationally. Be his best friend. Fulfill his emotional needs, be a good listener and know what is weighing on his heart. Understand why he feels what he feels and what is burdening him. Use her strengths to help him. Come alongside of her husband through thick and thin, good times and bad. Be committed to her husband unconditionally, without a doubt. Allow yourself to be easily led. Be the first one willing to initiate conflict resolution and be the first to admit you are wrong and ask for forgiveness.
* Spiritually. Support and assist your husband in the spiritual instruction of the family. Serve the Lord together, growing spiritually together and encouraging his spiritual life and relationship with the Lord. Come alongside him and support him in whatever ministry the Lord has him or both of you serving. Share your spiritual insights with your husband in a way that affirms his leadership.
* Intellectually. Be his sounding board and source of counsel to help him make wise decisions. We each have different perspectives to help see issues differently.
* Home Life. Work hard at home to run the household in a smooth and organized way so that the family needs are taken care of. Love and discipline your children well and help them to recognize sin and hate it. Help them to learn how to follow the Lord with their whole hearts.
* Loving him. Love him with a sacrificial love, by encouraging and appreciating him, being tender towards him, forgiving when needed, by being open and real with one another. Love him by meeting his physical needs. Know what makes him feel loved. Revealing yourself to your husband and being a safe place for him to reveal himself. A “one-flesh” love.
* Respecting him with how you talk to him, act towards him and think about him. Respect your husband not because he is worthy of it or “deserves” it.
* Decisions. Voice your desires in a respectful, non-threatening way; communicate in a way that reflects your respect for your husband’s leadership in your marriage and Christ’s leadership over the church.

In fulfilling her role as the Helper Suitable, the wife has the responsibility to submit to her husband. Submission is God’s idea and design. “Wives submit to your husbands, as if fitting to the Lord.” (Col 3:18).

* Submission does not mean: that the wife is inferior to her husband, that she must allow her husband to be a dictator or harsh to her, that she is not allowed to give input or express opinions or that she should submit if I am asked to sin, do something illegal or immoral.
* Submission is a willful choice to place myself under another’s authority. We are all submissive to various people in our lives including our bosses etc., but we are all to be submissive first and foremost to the Lord. Christ even submitted to the Father. Submission shows how much we trust God and the authorities that he has put over us in our life. God intended submission for protection of the wife.
* Fear wants to replace submission. The primary reason that women don’t want to submit is fear – fear of failing, fear of consequences etc. Fear manifests itself in many ways such as disrespect of his leadership, manipulative control tactics, pride etc. The opposite of fear is trust and confidence. Trust embraces submission. A godly woman’s protection is not dependent solely on the character of her husband. It is the character of God that provides security. When a woman submits to her husband, she is actually living out her trust in God. Prayer strengthens submission. Hindrances to love are bitterness and unforgiveness.

**Wives, ask your husbands the following two questions [Husbands: Please be gentle and gracious with how you answer these vulnerable questions from your wife]:**

1. Referring to the above list as a guide, what are some of the practical things that I already do that are really a help and encouragement to you in your role as the leader of our family?

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1. Is there something new that I can do or something that I can do better to help and encourage you even more in your role as the leader of our family?

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**Husbands, ask your wife the following questions [Wives: Please be gentle and gracious with how you answer these vulnerable questions from your husband]:**

1. In what areas of our marriage is it easiest for you to be submissive to me and why? In what areas of our marriage is it hardest for you to be submissive to me and why? For the area that is hardest, are you fearful about something? What can I do to help you trust me more and be submissive in that area that is hardest for us?

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**Additional Resources to Read:**

* “The Five Love Languages” by Gary Chapman
* “Love and Respect” by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

**MEN’S Breakout Time – Please come prepared to talk about the following:**

1. How have you followed through with the goals you set last month to improve the oneness in your marriage in regards to how you resolve conflict with your wife?

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1. What has the Lord taught you in your personal times with him this past week? How regularly were you in the word?

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1. Based on your wife’s answer to Question #2 above, what is an area that you could grow in to be a better leader in your marriage?

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1. Based on your wife’s answer to Question #4 above, what can you do to help your wife feel honored and cherished?

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**WOMEN’S Breakout Time – Please come prepared to talk about the following:**

1. How have you followed through with the goals you set last month to improve the oneness in your marriage in regards to how you how you resolve conflict with your husband?

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1. What has the Lord taught you in your personal times with him this past week? How regularly were you in the word?

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1. Based on your husband’s answer to Homework Question #6 above, is there something that you can do to help and encourage your husband in his role as the leader of our family?

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1. Based on your answer to Homework Question #7 above, in what areas of your marriage is it hardest for you to be submissive to me and why? For the area that is hardest, are you fearful about something that you need to turn over to the Lord?

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