

Before reading the notes, take some time to read the 3 passages in the file Session 5 Scripture.

Ephesians 5:15-33

- ☞ What is the main point (or points) of the text in the box?
 - Wives, submit (v. 22) and respect (v. 33) to husbands, as to the Lord. We do so for Him. Do you think those two words are interchangeable? How are they different?
 - Analogy: husband: wife :: Christ: church
 - Husbands, love wives, following Christ's example.
 - Because of the unity between Christ and church, man and wife need to leave family of origin and become one.
- ☞ How does your understanding of the text connect to what came immediately before?
 - This chapter is about how to walk in wisdom and in the Spirit. Right before this passage, v. 21, Paul tells us that we are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
 - The following verses, then, are specific relationships and ways in which we are to submit: wives/husbands, children/parents, slaves/masters.
 - Submission is a state of the heart expected of all God's people towards one another, as a way we walk in wisdom and in the Spirit. When we submit towards our husbands, this is living in Spirit-filled wisdom.

Colossians 3

- ☞ What is the main point (or points) of the text in the box?
 - Submit to husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Our relationship with God is reflected by our relationship with one another.
 - Husbands—love wives, do not be harsh.
 - Children—obey parents, please Lord.
 - Fathers, do not provoke children.
 - Bondservants, obey earthly masters sincerely, fearing the Lord.
 - Summary: whatever we do, it for the Lord, not for men, because we are serving Him, not man.
- ☞ How does your understanding of the text connect to what came immediately before and after?
 - If we are believers, raised with Christ, we need to take the high road in the way we live. What we believe is reflected in how we live.
 - Paul tells us specific things we are to put to death as well as things we are to put on. When we seek Christ, we will seek to live rightly with the people in our lives. There is a connection. We will seek to give life, not death. Submitting, then, is a way that we do what is consistent with living as believers raised with Christ.
 - Whatever we do, we do it in his name.

- Paul is not singling out a particular type of person. He is showing how this applies in any human relationship.

1 Peter 2:13-3:7

- ∞ What is the main point (or points) of the text in the box?
 - Wives are to be subject to their husbands, especially if they are not believers. In so doing, God can use their inner beauty to influence their husbands for Him.
 - Husbands are to live with their wives in an understanding way, which shows honor to her and keeps his prayers from being hindered.
- ∞ How does your understanding of the text connect to what came immediately before and after?
 - Peter's whole book is about suffering for the Lord in unfair circumstances. He exhorts his readers to be willing to subject themselves to human institutions as an act of submission to God.
 - Whether that institution is fair or not, they are to follow Christ's example. Like Him, they are to endure unjust suffering under the hands of God's authorities if need be.
 - In the same way, women were to submit to their husbands, just as they would submit to human institutions. God can use that submission to reach her husband's heart.

Summary of the Word:

I hope you had a good time in the Word. So much of the confusion, the misinterpretations of roles come when we don't go straight to His Word first. That's why I wanted you to look for yourself, even if you have read it before. When we look at these three passages, they all talk about how to live a godly life in general, with specifics for certain relationships. Submission, like godliness, is expected of all, men and women. We do so out of reverence for Christ, out of service for Him. Have you ever thought about that? When we submit to our husbands, we are also serving the Lord. That's a great two-for-one deal!

We are all to live honoring one another, not lording over each other, vying for supremacy. Ironically, we who are free in Christ are to use that freedom to live in submission to the human authorities God has instituted. This is true whether those authorities are God-fearing and fair or idolatrous and tyrannical. God asks us to live in respect of those authorities as a way to testify for Him.

And so, today, we're going to talk about 3 principles that I hope will help us start getting in line with God's design for marriage. Before we begin, let's pray:

Heavenly Father, we praise You for your wisdom and for revealing that wisdom through your word. Although it isn't always easy to live in the way that You desire for us, we ask that You will give us the strength and will to choose Your way instead of our own. Even though it is against the grain of culture, I pray that we will be able to use our marriages to be salt and light to a world that needs You. Open our hearts today to hear Your voice, and quicken our spirits to respond to Your commands. We trust that when we do so, we glorify You and become the blessing to our husbands that we desire to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

3 principles:

1. Appreciate God's design and order.

A few weeks ago, we talked about Eve being designed from the beginning by God to Adam's companion and helper. We'll talk a little more about this in the next principle.

But the fact is, God has designed and ordered the marriage relationship in a particular way. In His wisdom, He did not make men and women the same.

For us as women, growing up in this country, there has been a lot of emphasis on "girl power" and making sure that women have equal opportunities and rights as men do. Women have rallied for votes, educational opportunities, serving in the armed forces and even tackle football! The desire is that women have the opportunity to do whatever men do—and with the attitude that we can do it better! This has set up a battle between the sexes that pits one against the other.

However, I don't believe different means that one side is wrong and the other is right. If God made us male and female, and he has made us different, there must be a reason. The world wants us to be identical, but in so doing, we rob

ourselves of the beauty of what God intended. Instead, I believe we are to appreciate our unique roles as women, embracing the privileges and yes, the limitations, that come with it. If God wanted a unisex human, then I think He would have made it. But as He didn't, then I think we will be happiest when we learn to bloom where we are planted as women.

Our tendency is to subvert this. I think it is because of our sin nature. In Genesis 3, God tells Eve that “your **desire** shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” (v.16). I don't have time to go into this today, but I have a short explanation and devotional on the website that goes into more detail about what this means. In short, we are going to want to take over, but will be thwarted in our attempts.

Men, on the other hand, are to take leadership, but they do not. Adam was the first to renege on his charge. Women are to submit, but they want to take over. When we have a reversal of roles—which is not God's design—it contributes to strife and discontent, resentment and problems in marriage. So, I think the first thing we can do is to accept the way God has set things up. Don't fight it. In the husband/wife relationship, God has intended that we reflect Christ and His bride, the church. As I had mentioned in previous classes, our marriages are meant to be a relational reflection of a spiritual reality. It's best this way.

Interestingly, the call is for husbands to love, not lead. Leading is implied, but not stated when it tells wives to submit. Perhaps this is because loving is the more important point that God wants men to remember. Unfortunately, this is a source of great abuse, even among Christians. If your husband loves and cherishes you, he is doing his job, even if he's not the leader you want him to be. For us, the call is to submit, because that is what is probably hardest for us. He knows what we're made of, so he has to be explicit and clear. 1 Peter makes it clear that whether your husband is a believer or not, we are still to submit to him—and even more so because by so doing, we can become an instrument of God to bring him to faith.

Don't be jealous of your husband's role. It's actually the harder one. Did you see what is expected of him? I don't think I want that level of responsibility! Instead, let's take the role God has given us and then learn to embrace and enjoy it.

2. For better: Learn to live in interdependence.

Not only are we to appreciate and accept God's plan, we need to start learning the art of living it out. There is a fine balance required here. There are two extremes we want to avoid. Sometimes a couple starting out in their married life can be so enmeshed and ingrown, focused on one another that you are totally wrapped around each other. There is a danger of seeking your identity in your marriage. Like we talked about in our second week, we cannot find our fulfillment through our husbands.

The other extreme are married couples that live as two completely separate people, with him going one way and her going the other. This seems to really start happening when the kids come along. We become more like roommates than teammates. How do we maintain a healthy balance?

I think the key is being connected with God. Remember the pitcher-cup-saucer-plate illustration I shared with you? When we are finding our wholeness and meaning from God alone, He gives us the wisdom on how to live out our lives as a married woman. God sees us individually, as well as in the context as a couple. He wants us to grow in Him, follow Him, but at the same time, live out who we are in the framework of marriage. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” Individually, one strand or the other is not going to be able to stand alone, but when we are intertwined with one another, with God being our third strand, our marriages become strong.

Specifically, we are called to be the helper or ezer (Eldredge)—we play a role complementing our husbands in the ways he cannot. Adam was not able to find companionship in the animals, but Eve provided that. Adam was not able to be fruitful and multiply alone. With Eve, the two of them create children. Adam was not able to do all the work of cultivating and caring for creation. I am sure that Eve was beside him—not doing exactly the same thing he was doing, but doing her part while he did his, and together, they were able to carry out what God desired. There were some things only he could do. There were other things that only she could do.

Likewise, we are to do the same in our own marriages. I have listed nine points, but am only going to cover a few. I have put together an audio that goes into more detail with the others, as well as some activities to extend these points.

If you want him to lead, be willing to follow. Often, I hear women complain about their husbands who don't lead the way they want them to, or they are disappointed regarding his lack of leadership. I will admit that I have felt the same way. One time, when my husband and I were heatedly discussing this topic, he shot back at me: “If I was to lead, will you follow?” Ouch! He really hit a nerve here. Could it be that our husbands really do want to lead, but don't bother because they know it won't make any difference anyways? Remember: we are talking about us, not about them in this class. Are we willing to follow him where he leads?

Help bear his burdens. Lifting concerns from him is one way we help. Do it with joy, not resentment, Remember we are serving the Lord when we do so. One of the things that came up this past week when I was praying over next month was the realization that I can help my husband by doing food preparation for some of the events he does, like the Day with Jesus retreats. Right now, he does everything for those retreats—he plans the materials, gets the site and cares for all the administrative details, communicates with attendees, and prepares the

meal. If I can take something for him, I can help relieve his burden. Sometimes, it doesn't seem fair, especially if he does not help you. The burden then lies on us to lean heavily on the Lord and still give him a hand, taking the high road and living beyond reproach (1 Peter 3). This requires God's help!

Cover your marriage in prayer for your husband. This is so important. No one can pray for him like you do. Not even his mom. Ask God to do the work you cannot through your own efforts or means. Fight for him by praying for him. I love the picture of the "warrior princess" that John and Stasi Eldredge use in their book for women, *Captivating*. God needs us to rise up and fight for our husbands.

3. For best: Use your position to influence your husband to win him over (1 Peter 3).

Before I end today, however, I want to bring this to an even higher level. Not only are we to help our husbands, but we are made to be a powerful influence in their lives. Remember 1 Peter 3? Peter exhorts women to use their inner beauty to help influence their husbands in a positive way, toward the Lord. We want our husbands to be able to say that his life is better because of us. Do I bring out what God created him to be? Do I help him reach his God-given potential? Do I use my role as wife to inspire him to change?

There is a scene from *Beauty and the Beast* that I particularly love. Do you remember when he is trying to feed the birds and in his roughness, they all fly away from him? What does Belle do? Without saying anything, she demonstrates how to gently leave a trail of birdseed and then sit patiently. It works so well that he is covered in birds! After that, he responds by trying to be more civilized, giving his best efforts, trying to eat with a spoon. She meets him by going halfway. When she leaves to go tend to her father, he reverts to his old ways, but when she comes back, he rises up and fights again. We want to do this for our husbands.

On the contrary, nagging, complaining and griping often drive him to do the opposite. If your husband is not living up to what God desires from him, it is not up to us to change him by our snide comments and ridicule. In fact, those things will probably drive him even farther away from what you desire. At the root of the nagging is pride and arrogance—thinking that we know what our husband needs or that we know better than him. God isn't going to bless that.

This doesn't mean you throw your hands up in despair and give up. If we want to change our marriage, and we cannot change him, the only other person we can change is ourselves. When we change our approach, our perspective, even if our husband doesn't seem to budge an inch, I believe God can use that to change him if we are patient and stay faithful.

Gary Thomas in his book, *Sacred Influence*, suggests that women do two complementary things: 1) stop taking your husband for granted, and 2) appreciating what he has done. He writes, "Without feeling appreciated, admired, and genuinely respected, your husband probably will never change." He goes on and says, "Can you see the good in your husband, even when he's at his worst? Can you pause long enough to see the hurt behind the heat, and call him to his best? If you can learn to do that, you will move your man—directly into God's arms." (ch. 4) This is a great book to read—written by a man to women on how men think. Challenging and sometimes even frustrating, because it seems like all the hard work is on our shoulders.

Barbara Rainey of Family Life writes: "Marriage is a delicate dance. He initiates; I follow. He learns how to invite me, and I learn to respond. He may not do it all correctly, but he will never get better if I criticize him every time he steps on my toes or misses a beat. My job is to encourage him by responding to what is good and minimizing what isn't." *Rekindling the Romance*, p. 85

The Proverbs 31 woman is described as one who does her husband good and not harm all the days of his life. He trusts her and praises her. (v. 11, 12, 28) Do I do him good and not harm all the days of my life?

Men respond to a good woman. Many affairs happen because a wife does not give her husband a reason to step into his role. He is badgered at every turn. So when a woman at work fills that role that you are supposed to fill, then it is no wonder they gravitate towards her. Remember: your husband's job is to love and cherish you. If he is doing that, appreciate it, even if he isn't doing so well as a leader.

I know we talked about a lot today, but I want to give you some time to see if there is something God wants you to take home in particular. I'll lead us in a time of prayer, and feel free to jot down the thoughts and impressions that He lays on your heart.

Prayer and response:

1. Thanksgiving for God's wisdom in his design of the marriage relationship. **Where do you stand?** If you are discontent, are you willing to let Him teach you? If you embrace this, spend time recommitting yourself to the Lord.
2. How are you doing living in interdependence? Where are you now? How can you move towards increasing in a healthy unity and oneness? **Looking at the list of practical suggestions, what is something the Lord may want you to start doing or working toward?**
3. **How can you use your role to benefit your husband?** Does this resonate with your heart's desire for your marriage? Share your heart with

the Lord in this area. Ask Him how He may want to start using you to reach the heart of your husband and help him to become the man He created him to be.