



God's Divine Design Under Attack – Part 4
Various Scriptures
GCSP – 08/02/2008

Psychologists and secular “authorities” on marriage today have promoted the idea of the role less marriage. A marriage where both the husband and wife set aside and even shun any preconceived notions of who provides the majority of the income, who is the primary caregiver for the children, who cooks, who cleans, who does the yard work, who makes the financial decisions, etc.

As with many of the ideas these and others promote, this one doesn't come from scientific study or any tried and true method for discovering what is best, but instead it comes from the sinful inclinations of people who have been spurred on by Satan and his demons. In other words, many of these psychologists and “authorities” base the ideas they promote on the desires of the people they counsel.

Satan's evil world agenda has been pushed so hard and for so long that God's principles are either branded as archaic and un-applicable for today's world or they are ridiculed and completely shunned, even by Christians. Men have abandoned their role as the head of the family and women have taken the lead. Men have become more passive and women have become more aggressive. Men have become more feminine and women have become more masculine.

The roles have been so perverted by Satan through the years that the majority of Christian marriages are nowhere near operating as God intended. And the most tragic thing is no one knows they are that far off base; they simply accept the strife and arguments and lack of harmony as “just the way things are.” They sing the sad refrain that all marriages have their problems.

But isn't that in essence saying that God's design is inherently flawed? Follow with me in this logic for a moment: Although we know we are sinners saved by grace, and we also know that we still fall to sinful actions on occasion, we still think we are in the right when an argument ensues. When both parties believe they are right, one or both are actually wrong. But if we persist in believing we are right and simply accept the cold shoulders, the silent treatments, and the walking out on each other, as part of being married, aren't we at times thinking to ourselves, “God, I'm doing my part but this isn't working the way you said.”?

I'm not sure if that illustration makes my point very clear so let me just make a statement and if you can prove me wrong through Scripture then see me afterwards and I will stand corrected next week.

Here's the statement: When we accept less than God designed for our marriages we are in essence saying we do not believe God's Word.

And beloved, God's design for our marriages is not arguments and strife. So do not be duped into believing Satan's lies that it is normal for all marriages to have conflict and

problems. When you make statements like that and believe them you are believing Satan, not believing God, and probably just making excuses for your own sin.

Last week I primarily focused on the wife's role in the marriage relationship as God has designed it to be. We first looked at a passage in **2 Timothy 3** to see some of the characteristics of the human race living under the curse of sin. We saw how the descriptions of mankind in that passage look very much like today's world, and thus, according to that passage, we are living in the last days.

I then related each of those characteristics to the marriage relationship and showed how all of them fight against godly marriages. Paul said **difficult times will come**; and I believe these difficult times have already had their effect on the marriage as God designed it. These characteristics are running rampant in our world today and all too often they are doing the same in our marriages. It's only by the grace of God that the divorce rate is not 100% instead of 50%.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Ephesians 5**.

Ephesians 5:22-33

Let's pray.

Before I complete my review of last week's sermon, let me ask a question. Is that passage of Scripture hard to understand? Is it confusing in any way? The answer is obviously, "No!" It may be hard to swallow for some, but it is no way confusing or difficult to understand.

In **verses 22-24**, we also saw last week that the command for wives to be subject to their husband's God-given authority is given in a much softer way than, "**Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands**" as the King James puts it. The Greek word for "submit" or "be subject to" does not actually appear in this verse; the sentiment is definitely there, but the way it is carefully worded in the original Greek shows that God desires a voluntary and willing submission or subjection.

The term, "**be subject**", refers to a relinquishing of one's rights. It does not imply any differences in value or worth or superiority, but it does imply a willing submission of oneself. Throughout Scripture God desires willing obedience and willing sacrifice; and it is no different in this instance.

And finally, we saw how Paul beautifully illustrates the meaning of a suitable helper from **Genesis 2:18**, and how it meant to compliment or to complete. A head without a cooperative body is far from complete. An un-submissive wife renders her husband as a spiritual quadriplegic. A wife trying to live apart from the head renders herself as a spiritual spastic; twitching and convulsing every which way and accomplishing very little, if anything. When mind and body work in unison, there is literally nothing that cannot be accomplished.

A wife who willingly is subject to her own husband as to the Lord, honors God, honors her husband, honors her family, honors her church, and even honors herself. And she also becomes a beautiful testimony of the Lord to a watching world.

Well, enough review on the women. Men, it is time for us to face the music so to speak. In the rest of this passage in Ephesians, and let me stress again that God takes nine verses to outline our responsibility and only three for the wives, God reveals what it means to be the head. Let me give you a summary at the beginning on the biblical characteristics of headship:

- Responsibility, not rank
- Sacrifice, not selfishness
- Duty, not domination

Men, your role as a husband is to lead with these Christlike qualities. You are to seek your wife's best, even at your own expense. Headship defined in this way is a high and holy calling.

Some of you may be familiar with Gary Larsen's "Far Side" comic strip. One of his cartoons showed Robin Hood bowing down on one knee and handing a bag full of money to two surprised porcupines. The caption read: "Historic note: Until his life's destiny was further clarified, Robin Hood spent several years robbing from the rich and giving to the porcupines."

Men, if your life's destiny as a husband has not been clarified up until this point in time, I trust as we get through these nine verses there will be absolutely no doubt left. Headship is a calling to empower another person not to indulge yourself. True leaders understand this principle, and never more so than in the marriage relationship. True leaders do not promote their position, their authority, or any other aspect that elevates their own importance or ego. True leaders lift up and empower those they have authority over.

The husband's headship under the curse is supreme rule, domination, and keeping his wife under his feet. The husband's headship under Christ is sacrificial love and selflessness.

Jesus addressed this conflict between curse-like leadership versus Christlike leadership in the gospel of **Luke**.

Hold you place in **Ephesians** and turn with me in your Bibles to **Luke 22**.

Luke 22:24-27

Servant and leader seem to be opposite of each other, yet Jesus speaks about them as the same thing in regards to what true headship, true authority, and true leadership is. You are tempted to answer His questions in **verse 27** with an obvious "yes" but He then contradicts that answer by saying, "**I am among you as the one who serves.**" Yes it is true that men have been handed the role and responsibility of headship and authority, but we are to display that headship in the manner of a servant, not a lord. Author William Hendricks says, "*Our role is not to suck the life out of our wives but to be a source of life to them; only then can we claim the title "head" as God proclaimed it in Christ*" (Rocking the Roles, page 60).

Hendricks goes on to say to husbands, *"Your leadership is to be molded after Christ's leadership of His bride, the Church. Christ didn't use the Church. He didn't dominate her, or force His leadership on her. On the contrary, He earned the right of leadership by expending Himself for His bride, and ultimately dying for her. It was a cross that gave Jesus the ultimate right to lead. In the same way, you must earn the right to be the head of your home. And yet, you can do that only when there is a similar cross in your own life. Only as you die to your own selfishness, only as you willingly give yourself up for your bride – only then can you begin to be a Christlike head."*

That's a pretty sobering statement isn't it? Biblical leadership is obviously not a place of ease and advantage, but a calling to work, sacrifice, and service.

Turn back to **Ephesians 5** and let's briefly look at the several aspects of this passage that unfolds what I have been talking about.

v. 25 – A Sacrificial Love

Men, I am not sure we fully understand the impact of that statement. I know we don't first of all because we cannot completely fathom the love Christ has for the Church. The love of Christ is perfect and pure and as long as our sin nature continues to dwell within us we cannot grasp the concept of utter perfection and complete purity. That being said, I am sure some of you at least feel as if you love your wife in somewhat the way Christ loves the Church.

Romans 5:8 says, **"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."** **Verse 10** goes on to tell us that we were **"enemies"** of God and Christ at the time.

So let me ask you a question: Do you love your wife as Christ loves the Church when she is nagging on you? Do you love her as Christ loved the Church when she is cross and ornery; when she is argumentative and irrational; when she is moody? Do you truly love your wife as Christ loves the Church? Don't talk to me about how hard it is to love her – how hard was it for Christ to love you while you were still His enemy; while you were living a life oblivious to Him; while you were a blasphemer and a reprobate; while you in essence cursed Him with your life?

Men, if we ever say we no longer love our wives we are being disobedient to His Word. That's what it says doesn't it? As I said before, there isn't anything difficult to understand in this passage; nothing has a hidden meaning here.

The world loves selectively. The world bases its love for their wives in an object-oriented sort of way. Everything depends on the object of his love. The world's love is based on physical attractiveness, personality, wit, charm, prestige, wealth, or some other positive characteristic. This is obviously a very fickle kind of love because when the characteristic or object that you love fades away or changes, the "love" also disappears.

I am not saying that physical qualities and characteristics are unimportant in a relationship, because they are to a certain extent, but they should never be the determining factor in expressing your love to your wife. If all of your wife's positive qualities and characteristics faded away tomorrow, you are still obligated and

responsible to love her as Christ loves the Church. In fact, if something like that happened you would in essence be more obligated than ever before because her greater need for the healing and restorative power of genuine and self-sacrificing love.

John MacArthur states, "*Love, as God defines it, is much more an action than an emotion*" (Divine Design, page 64). He goes on to state, "*The world says, 'When the feeling stops, the love is over.'*"

That's not the love described in the Bible. That's not the love commanded of husbands in the Bible. The husband who loves his wife as Christ loves His Church will give up everything he has for his wife, including his life if necessary. I've heard many husbands state that he would give up his life for his wife, but at the same time he won't give up his Sunday afternoon in front of the TV to go out and do something she desires to do together.

Men, when you give up your own likes, desires, opinions, preferences, and welfare in order to please your wife and to meet her needs, then you are dying to self and truly loving your wife as Christ loves His Church.

In the chapter known as the love chapter of the Bible, Paul says, "(Love) **does not seek its own**" (**1 Corinthians 13:5**). If you continually are looking for what you can get out of your marriage instead of what you can give, you will never know and understand what it means to truly love your wife – and you will be guilty of the sin of disobedience to God.

v. 26-27 – A Purifying Love

When you love your wife as Christ loves the Church, your goal will be to make and keep her pure. Christ is not content for even one sin to defile our lives, but He doesn't simply condemn the wrong, He seeks to cleanse us from the wrong. **1 John 1:9** tells us, "**If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness***" (italic added).

Love wants only the best and cannot bear for his love to be corrupted or misled by anything evil or harmful.

When you married your wife you began the purifying process by in essence taking her out of the world and away from her past. Marriage set her apart and purified her as your bride. Purifying love will express itself by protecting her from anything that would defile her. Purifying love does everything within its power to maintain her holiness and virtue. Don't tempt her to sin. Don't induce an argument by bringing up a topic that you know is sensitive to her. Don't give her any reason to feel hurt or rejected by flirting with another woman.

The act of marriage is a symbolic cleansing of the bride and it is your responsibility to maintain that purity in your wife.

v. 28-30 – A Caring Love

You spend a lot more time on your body than you probably realize. You shower, shave, brush your teeth, comb your hair, apply deodorant (or at least I hope you do), adorn

yourself with clothing, eat at least somewhat healthy foods, exercise, and do all manner of other things to take care of your body. When your body has a need you are quick to take care of it. If your stomach is upset you take an antacid or drink some milk. When you have a headache, you lie down and relax or you take a pill. When you cut your hand you wash the wound, apply an antibiotic and wrap it with a bandage. There is typically no delay in taking care of the need your body has.

What's the process when your wife has a need you are aware of? Do you make a mental note and hope it takes care of itself? Do you continue doing what you were doing and let her fend for herself? Do you even give it a second thought?

That's not loving her as Christ loves His Church.

The word translated as "**cherishes**" in **verse 29**, literally means "*to warm with body heat.*" It is used to describe a mother bird sitting on her nest of eggs. Husbands are to provide a warm, safe, and secure environment for their wives; a place of protection and provision.

v. 31-33 – An Unbreakable Love

The emphasis here is on the permanence of love as much as it is on the unity. Just as the love Christ has for His Church is permanent and unbreakable, so too must our love for our wives be. God's standard for marriage has not changed even if the world views it as temporary and replaceable.

God says in **Malachi 2:16**, "**I hate divorce.**" He hates divorce because it breaks what He has designed as unbreakable. It saddens me to see the divorce rates within the church coming very close to the divorce rates outside the church. There should be a marked difference between our marriages and the marriages of the world. God gives us two reasons when a divorce is allowed. When your spouse commits adultery or when an unbelieving spouse initiates the divorce and wants out – but even in these instances He does not ordain divorce or desire for you to get a divorce, He simply allows it if you are not able, humanly and through the help of His Holy Spirit, to let love cover the offence.

One other thing we must take note of is a great barrier to successful marriages is the failure of one or both to leave father and mother. A new family is created at marriage and the previous ties of authority and control are to be cut. The relationship between child and parent still exists and there are still many ties that will continue to bind, and we are to still be respectful and seek their advice, but they no longer have the final word in your life.

And while all of us in here probably no longer have to deal with this issue as the children, we need to be mindful of the effect we are having on the marriage relationships of our children. Are we still trying to control their lives? And if so, do you realize that you are in essence adding another stress to that marriage; a marriage that could easily end in divorce if enough stresses are piled on to it?

Well, in God's eyes, the only true dissolution of the marriage is death. As Christ is one with His Church, so should the husband be one with his wife. The husband, who harms

his wife, harms himself. The husband, who violates and destroys his marriage, violates and destroys himself.

Submission on the wife's part and sacrificial, purifying, caring love on the husband's part is a symbol of Christ and His Church. Any lack of obedience to these commands in this passage of Scripture is a denial of Christ and His Church.

When Christian husbands and wives walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, yield to the authority of His Word, and are mutually submissive, the end result will be blessing and breaking the power of sin's curse on our marriages.

We are not done with this topic, as there are many other passages of Scripture that add many more layers to our understanding of what it means to have a godly marriage, but we will save them for next time.

Let's pray.