

## **Biblical Masculinity and Femininity (part 3)**

### **The Wife's Role In Marriage**

By Chris Patton

#### **I. Introduction**

- What is the wife's role?
- How does a wife practically fulfill her role?

#### **II. Her Role: Helper**

“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him.’ ” (Genesis 2:18 ESV)

“...for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her, to the man.” (Genesis 2:20-22 ESV)

#### **III. Her Call: Help**

“He needs a companion suitable for him in the work to which God has called him. He is called to the work and must receive help from her. She is called to the work through ministering to him. He is oriented to the task, and she is oriented to him.” (Douglas Wilson, *Reforming Marriage*, p. 19)

“Her goal is to give her man all the help he needs to lead well.” (John Ensor, *Doing Things Right in Matters of the Heart*, p. 97)

How does a wife help her husband?

- 1) She patiently, persistently and humbly helps him to grow in godliness where he is weak.
- 2) She patiently, persistently and humbly helps him to excel in his God-given roles of husband and father and urges him forward as he seeks to fulfill His God-assigned tasks outside of the home.

#### **IV. Her Call: Respect**

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

“Respect is a demeanor that should characterize wives in all their conduct toward their husbands and in all their communication to or about their husbands.” (Nancy Wilson, *The Fruit of Her Hands*, p.37)

“Respect is something that is displayed by the way we treat our husbands. Even if we feel it, we must not stop there but go on to show it. And if we do not feel it, we must not stop there but go on to show it. And if we do not feel it, we are still commanded to show it.” (Nancy Wilson, *The Fruit of Her Hands*, p.31)

What does respecting your husband involve?

From *The Fruit of Her Hands*, by Nancy Wilson

1. “Never downgrade your husband to anyone”
2. “Never rub in his mistakes”
3. “You must communicate to him that you respect him and you need to tell him why.”

From *Love that Lasts*, by Gary and Betsy Ricucci

1. “Develop a habit of directing your thoughts about your husband in biblical God-glorifying directions. Dwell thankfully on his strengths rather than resentfully on his weaknesses.”
2. “Commend and encourage your husband wherever you can.”

## **V. Her Call: Submit**

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:22 ESV)

“Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.” (Ephesians 5:24 ESV)

### **A. What Submission Is Not**

- 1) Submission does not mean that the wife submits to every man
- 2) Submission does not mean the wife has no say in family decisions

“When the home is functioning biblically, the husband will consult and honor his wife’s input into family decisions and actions. Caring compromise whenever possible characterizes the home where husband and wife are seeking to honor God and each other as the Bible directs.” (Brian Chapell, *Each for the Other: Marriage As It’s Meant to Be*, p.82)

- 3) Submission does not mean the wife is constrained to submit when to do so requires disobedience to God.

### **B. What Submission Means**

“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.” (John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, p. 61)

“As the church could never fulfill its purposes without submitting to the holy will of the Lord, the apostle reminds women that they cannot fulfill God’s intentions for them if they do not submit to the biblical purposes of their husbands. Obviously this example constrains the wife by requiring her to submit her will to that of her husband so that God’s plans for the home will prosper.” (Brian Chapell, *Each for the Other: Marriage As It’s Meant to Be*, p.79)

### **C. Submission: “As to the Lord”**

“Wives are to submit to their husbands ‘as to the Lord’ (Eph. 5:22). This biblical phrasing does not mean a wife should treat her husband as though he were God. We are not to make idols out of anything or anyone. Rather, the words indicate that a woman’s submission is motivated not so much by a husband’s deserving as by God’s purposes. She renders the service the Bible requires as to God himself (with all appropriate devotion and joy), rather than simply to another human (whose failings may make her service seem unfair and onerous). The idea is that as a woman submits to her husband, she looks over his shoulder to see the Lord who is saying, ‘You are ultimately doing this not for him but for me.’” (Brian Chapell, *Each for the Other: Marriage As It’s Meant to Be*, p.81)

## **VI. Her Call: Busy In the Home**

“Evidently God had in mind from the beginning that the man would take special responsibility for sustaining the family through bread-winning labor, while the wife would take special responsibility for sustaining the family through childbearing and nurturing labor. Both are life-sustaining and essential. The point of this Genesis text is not to define limits for what else the man and woman might do. But it does suggest that any role reversal at these basic levels of childcare and breadwinning labor will be contrary to the way he made us as male and female for our ordained roles. Supporting the family is primarily the responsibility of the husband. Caring for the children is primarily the responsibility of the wife.” (Wayne Grudem and John Piper, *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p.42-43)

“But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8 ESV)

“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.” (Titus 2:3-5 NIV)

“During her lifetime [Proverbs 31 woman] she pursued many endeavors beyond the confines of her house. She worked among the poor and needy, she traveled, she bought real estate and planted vineyards, she made linen garments and sashes and sold them, she participated in trading—but her primary motive and goal with all these enterprises was to serve her family and home.” (Carolyn Mahaney, *Feminine Appeal*, p.104)

## **VII. The Wife’s Role Is Ultimately About the Gospel**

### **A. The Gospel is a wife’s only hope to fulfill her role**

### **B. The wife’s role advances the cause of the gospel**

- The more a wife fulfills her role, the more her marriage will accurately portray the relationship between Christ and His church.
- As a wife fulfills her God-given role, she propels the advance of the Gospel in and through her husband and children.