

TITLE: "THE WIFE'S ROLE IN MARRIAGE" TEXT: Ephesians 5:21-33

INTRO: I read recently about a golden anniversary party that was thrown for an elderly couple. The husband was very moved by the occasion and wanted to tell his wife what he thought of her. She was hard of hearing, however, and often misunderstood what he said. With many family members and friends gathered around, he toasted his wife and said, "My dear wife, after 50 years I've found you tried and true!" Everyone clapped for them, but his wife was a little irritated and asked, "What did you say?" So he repeated it again: "AFTER 50 YEARS, I'VE FOUND YOU TRIED AND TRUE!" The wife was now visibly upset and shouted back. "Well, let me tell you something, after 50 years I'm tired of you too!"

Well, we are in a series on the family and marriage. We have seen that marriage is a divine institution, designed and created by God. It is a covenantal relationship based on trust. And marriage was designed to be a picture of a deep spiritual truth; it was to be a picture of Christ and His church. Because God designed marriage He knows how it will best work and He reveals that to us in His Owner's Manual the Bible. Last week we saw that the role of the husband is to be that of Loving Leadership. He is the head of his home, which means he is to lead his family, protect his family, and provide for his family, and guide his family in Christ. Headship does not mean that he is responsible to make every decision but it does mean that he is responsible before God for every decision made under his headship. He is also to love his wife as Christ loves the church. He is to love her with a sacrificial love (to die to self and live for his wife); a sanctifying love (purifying love – he is to help his wife and family grow spiritually and in purity – we are spiritually responsible for our wives and family); he is to love her with a caring satisfying love (striving to know and meet her needs – serving her). It is the husband's privilege and responsibility to portray the headship of Christ over the church and the love of Christ for His church. That is the Role of the Husband in the marriage relationship.

This morning we turn to the Role of the Wife in Marriage. I received an interesting email this past week from one of the wives in our congregation. I will not say who this was. She said Pastor I just want you to know how much I appreciate your message last week to the husbands. That message was right on. I also noted that this week you are preaching on the wife's role in the marriage and I am planning to be deathly ill this Sunday. I wrote back. That's very interesting but don't worry your husband has already signed up to receive 10 CD's of this Sunday's message. (10 Copies) Knowing how perfect of a wife you are why would he sign up for 10 copies? You will have to come in sometime and explain that one to me. Praying for your Health, Pastor Les. Actually I see that this wife has repented and is here this morning, so I guess my prayer actually did work. Please turn in your Bible to Ephesians 5:21-24 "And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything."

These verses are not politically correct, they sound to many out dated and archaic, but they are God's blue print for the Christian wife. The God given role of the wife in marriage is that of Submission. There is much misconception and misunderstanding of what submission means so before we look at what submission means, we must blast before we build.

I. WHAT SUBMISSION IS NOT!

- 1. It is not Personal Inequality (Ontological, Spiritual, mental)** Genesis 1 tells us that God created man & woman in the image and likeness of God. That means that we are ontologically equal as male and female. Galatians 3:28 states that "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, we are all one in Christ." As far as salvation is concerned the ground is level at the cross. And I Peter 3 states, as far as our position in Christ, the husband and the wife are joint heirs of Grace. So when wives are told to submit it doesn't mean that the husband is more spiritual than the wife. In fact many wives are more spiritual than their husbands. Wives also may have a higher IQ than their husband; they may be smarter. Submission has nothing to do with personal inequality.
- 2. It is not Passivity** It does not mean that you allow your husband to make every decision without your input. It is not agreeing with him on everything. If you and your husband agree on everything one of you is not necessary. General George Patton put it this way, "If everyone is thinking alike, someone is not thinking." I think God puts a husband and wife together because generally men and women do see things differently; we are wired differently. And when there is communication between them, two heads can be better than one. Believe it or not there are times that Linda disagrees with me. I tell her that she has every right to be wrong. No actually most of the time when I consider what she is saying, I come to the conclusion she's right. A wife can disagree with her husband and still be submissive.
- 3. It is not Slavery** This is the 21st Century view of the word. I think this is why so many people react so negatively when this "S" word is spoken, because they relate submission to slavery, or being a little doormat for your husband. John MacArthur in his book *The Family* has a chapter entitled "Submission is not Slavery." He states, "A wife is not a slave standing in the middle of the house awaiting commands: Do this, get that, go over there, fix me that." Wives are not to be treated as children or slaves.
- 4. It is not Reckless Obedience** That is, a wife should not indulge in sin if the husband demands it. In fact, a loving leader would never demand his wife to do anything that would hurt her, demean her, degrade her or impede her in her relationship with Christ.

II. WHAT SUBMISSION IS!

- 1. The Definition** Biblical submission is the willful placing of oneself under the authority of an equal, this being demonstrated in the attitudes of humility and respect and the actions of obedience and service.
- 2. Several Truths about Submission**
 - a. Submission is the Duty of All Christians (21)** Many times when Pastors preach on submission of the wife they begin with verse 22, but I like to begin in verse 21. I like to begin there because I do not want anyone to think that it is only the wife who is to practice submission, nothing could be further from the truth. Verse 21 states, "Submit yourselves one to another (and be subject to one another) in the fear of Christ." Submission is the duty of all Christians. Specifically Scripture tells us to submit ourselves to governing authorities (Romans 13; I Peter 2); to employers (Eph 6, Col 3); Young people and children are to submit to their parents (Eph 6, Col 3); the church is to submit to church leaders (Hebrews 13:17); and we are to submit ourselves one to another in the church (Eph 5:21) and yes in the home wives need

to submit themselves to their husbands and husbands need to submit themselves to their wives. And it says we are to do this "in the fear of Christ." This tells us that if we are not living in submission to one another there is something wrong with our relationship with Christ. If I am not living a life of submission then I am not submitting to the Lord. This is the duty of all Christians.

b. Submission is a High and Holy Calling Submission is not something negative and ugly. Submission is a beautiful thing. It is the same calling Jesus Christ took upon Himself when He came to this world to be our Savior. There is a beautiful description of this in Philippians 2: 3-11 "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit (Biggest problem in marriage selfishness 'I'), but in humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude (mind KJV) in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself (made Himself of no reputation) taking on the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father." That is a picture of Submission. Jesus Christ willingly placed Himself under the authority of an equal (God the Father) and came to this earth to be our Savior. He thought nothing of Himself and everything of us. He demonstrated His submission by the attitudes of Humility and reverence and through the actions of obedience and service. (8) "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus said elsewhere "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many." Jesus' whole earthly life models Biblical submission. Submission is a high and holy calling because it is a calling to be like Jesus.

c. Submission is the Specific Role of the Christian Wife Back to Ephesians 5:22 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." This is the specific role of the wife in the marriage relationship. This is a command of God to Christian wives. If you are not submitting to your husband you are not submitting to the Lord. Note: The command is always given to the one who is responsible to carrying out the command or responsible for carrying out the action. Wives are told to submit themselves. Husbands are never told to make their wives submit. I've looked for that verse in the Bible for years and haven't been able to find it. Why should the wife submit? God gives the reason in verse 23 "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church..." In Personhood the husband and wife are equal; in Function their roles are different. There must be a spiritual leader, a leader of love, and God has given that role to the husband. The role He has assigned to the wife is that of Submission. The wife is to willingly place herself under the authority and leadership of the husband, and that is to be demonstrated in her attitudes toward him of humility and respect and actions of obedience and service. The wife is to respect and build-up her husband and support him in his leadership of the family.

III. AN ILLUSTRATION OF SUBMISSION (I Peter 3:1-6)

At this point I can hear some wives saying, "But Pastor you don't know my husband." He is very difficult to get along with. He often doesn't act too Christian-like. In fact there are times when I don't even think he is saved. Or maybe you are saying my husband is not saved. Does that get me off the hook? Do I still have to submit to my husband? Or another is saying, my husband is not taking the role of spiritual leadership in our home, shouldn't I take that role for the sake of the kids? If he won't do it someone's got to do it. Look at what I Peter 3:1-6 says. (vss 1, 2 Read) Verse one is a clear case of a non-Christian husband who is disobedient to the Word and wives are told to be submissive to them, so that they may win them to Christ without a word by the behavior of the wife as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. You are not to preach your husband to Christ or nag him to Christ but respect him and love him and by your life lead him to Jesus. Now verses (3, 4) of these 2 verses there is more nonsense per square inch taught than maybe any other verses in the Bible. They are not prohibiting the wearing of Jewelry any more than they are prohibiting women wearing dresses. Peter is saying let your focus be not on the external as much as on the internal adornment of the heart. It is OK to look nice on the outside but your emphasis should be on the hidden person of the heart, inside having a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God. Then in verses 5 and 6 he gives the illustration of Sarah. (READ) Sarah married Abraham. And her husband asked her to do some very difficult things. He told her one day that they were moving out of town. A normal response would be, "Where are we moving to?" God said to move and go to a place and I will tell you when you get there. This meant leaving home, family, friends, familiar environment, and just pick up and leave. Most wives would have said, "Drop dead, you have been out in the sun too long, over your dead body, no way Hosea." But Sarah obeyed, with a submissive spirit and remember as far as we know God had spoken to Abe only and not Sarah. And when they got there to where they were going everything went peachy right? No, a famine hit the land. What would some wives do? They would throw it up in the husband's face. Look what you got us into? You really blew it this time. Not, Sarah! Then things went from bad to worse and Abe wasn't perfect. He made a wrong decision to go down to Egypt, told a 1/2 truth, calling Sarah his sister not his wife and endangered her purity. He did that not once but twice, he repeated this with King Abimelech. On top of all that, on another occasion Abe invited strangers home for dinner without first consulting his wife (NOT GOOD) Many wives would have thrown these things up in the face of their husband. Remind him every time he went to make a decision for the family of all the bad past decisions. But Sarah after all that "Called him Lord." She continued to show respect for her husband and build him up and to submit herself to his authority. I believe that much of the success of Abe was due to the strength of his godly wife. She made heaven's Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11.

APPL: Women you might say this is hard pastor. No it's not hard, it's impossible for you to do without the filling of God's Holy Spirit. This is where your relationship with Jesus comes in. As you are solid with the Lord and seeking Him, He will give you that submissive spirit and enable you to respect and submit to your husband. And as husbands take the role of loving leadership & wives take the role of loving submission we give the world a picture of Christ and the Church.

Last Thursday night Linda and I went to visit some dear friends of our Joe and Rita MeLeland. When we moved here 35 years ago Joe and Rita adopted us, and they have been spiritual parents to us and Grandparents to our kids. Joe & Rita married years ago. It won't last. As I have watched Joe & Rita throughout the years & their relationship as husband & wife, I have seen Joe lovingly lead his family, & Rita love and respect & honor Joe. I thanked them for giving me a picture of Christ & His church. Tomorrow they celebrate 68th anniversary.