

THE BIBLICAL FAMILY

WEEK 3: HOW DO HUSBANDS AND WIVES FUNCTION IN THE FAMILY?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- In this 6-week series we are going to discuss the Biblical family. This is going to be an overview of what the Bible says about some key topics, roles and patterns that should be in every family.
- Week 1: What is a Biblical family?
- Week 2: What priorities do parents, husbands & wives, have in their family?
- **Week 3: How do husbands and wives' function in the family? Part I**
- Week 4: How do husbands and wives' function in the family? Part II
- Week 5: How can conflicts be handled and resolved Biblically? Part I
- Week 6: How can conflicts be handled and resolved Biblically? Part II
- The overall goal of this class is to give theological understanding and practical wisdom on the purpose of the family and how God desires to use the family for His glory and for our good.

INTRODUCTION

- So far, we have defined the Biblical family and how it looks distinguished from the world's "good" family. We have also looked at what the Bible says a family is and is not.
- Last week we discussed the importance of not only having goals and plans for your family but also how you are to accomplish them.
- We talked some about the spiritual heritage that one can leave for their family and also some practical ways one can influence their family and set the up for spiritual success.
- Over the next two weeks we are going to talk about different roles which are in the family unit.
- While the family as a whole should be functioning for the family's common purpose, there are individual roles which need to be filled in order for that purpose to come to fruition.
- This week we are going to define what the world says about gender roles in the family. We are also going to discuss the role of the wife and mother.
- Next week we are going to discuss the role of the husband, father and children in the family.

THE “IDEA” OF ROLES FOR THE FAMILY

- In our current time, the “idea” of roles has been frowned upon and looked at as archaic.
- There are some which see no gender distinction between a husband and a wife’s roles.
- “Although we’re far from done, social movements have allowed women to achieve a greater level of **equality**. However, not all marriages have partners who are on equal footing, and in some cases, that’s by choice. Couples generally fall into one of two camps: partners either lean towards the **traditional perspective** of male breadwinner/female homemaker, or hold the more **contemporary view that men and women are equal** and have **shared responsibilities**.”¹
- The *modern* or *present* view is that within marriage, men and women are equal. If you are not for the contemporary view then you do not believe that men and women are equal.
- This is why Christians must be so diligent in where they look for input. If one goes to a psychologist (this quote and article is from Psychology Today) or any other non-Christian source, they are going to leave with the world’s ideas and strategies.
- Having roles in the marriage is not only traditional, but more importantly, it is Biblical.

What roles are not.

- We need to define the phrase “marriage roles.”
- Since the world we live in has their own set of standards and ideas, we need to make sure that we are not defining things the way they do.
- **As you can read in the above quote, our society equates roles and worth or equality as the same thing.**
- **This means they are not looking at the individual but at what the individual does.**
- This is very important to understand. When looked at this way, we are not talking about the person but what the person is doing which gives them worth.
- This means that identity comes from not who you are but what you do. If you are doing something that our society sees as valuable, then you have value in your worth.
- In this case, it’s important to get this, roles that were “traditionally” for men, are valuable because either men exclusively did them or because women were not doing them.
- Our modern society says that in order to have worth in a marriage, the man’s traditional roles must be done by both the man and the woman.
- **“...the reality is couples who hold onto traditional gender roles are not as satisfied with their marriages as those who accept more contemporary roles.** Modern thinking couples are sometimes referred to as

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/so-happy-together/202001/how-do-gender-roles-impact-marriage>

androgynous, because the two partners share a number of personal traits. Both husbands and wives possess some degree of what might be considered **masculine traits**, such as means-ends problem solving, and **feminine traits**, such as emotional expressiveness.”²

- First of all, I would like to point out that we have gone from roles, to equality, to identity and now to personal traits of men and women. The article is about gender roles. This is why we need to be careful when reading articles as they will bring you down a myriad of rabbit trails.
- The article simply states that those who hold to traditional (or Biblical) roles are not as satisfied as those who do not. Based on their article, there is no foundation for their statement, just their own observational and hypothetical assessment.
- This is the clear case for man’s wisdom in **1 Corinthians 1:18-20** “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.’ Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”
- The wisdom of man says that having clearly defined roles in the marriage is what will deteriorate the marriage.
- “Androgynous couples do better because **they can identify with each other**. When two people have similar ways of thinking, they have an easier time communicating **because they understand each other**. In contrast, those who are more traditional might have difficulty at times seeing their partner’s side of issues. When conflicts arise, they are not as well equipped to handle them because they see the world primarily from the perspective of their different gender roles.”
- We must see that there is some good insight here, but it is pointing us in the wrong direction. **We should not be trying to identify with our spouse, but with Christ.**
- It is true that it is easier to communicate with someone who understands you. That is not true for marriages only, but life in general.
- **As a Christian, we should not see our marriage through the lens of different gender roles, but through Christ.**
- **Believers are not to equate value or worth to someone based on what they do.**
- Speaking of giving someone better treatment because of their outward worth, **James 2:9** “But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”
- Christians go past where the world says to end. We look at a person as having worth because they were created in the image of God.

² Ibid.

- Our ultimate end is not having roles so that one person dominates but so that the marriage not only works but works as God intended it to.
- The world tells women they have worth if they do what a man can traditionally do. Then they leave women in the cold and say they cannot define a woman.
- They then say that women and men get along better when they share in traits which are common to a gender but then tell us to pick a gender based on how we feel.
- **This is the ultimate end of the world's wisdom.** It is ever changing and shifting to make sure that everyone's thoughts and ideas of truth are included. No matter how ridiculous it may sound, it must be accepted.
- How does the modern culture view traditional husbands in the marriage relationship?
- "In the case of traditional marriages, **both husbands and wives are comfortable with the idea that the husband is dominant.** They have a set of expectations about how each partner should behave and **they find their respective roles to be natural and even preferred.** **While they might admit to themselves that their relationship is many ways imbalanced, they are willing to live with things as they are because that's how they see the way of the world.** **We should point out that these relationships are acceptable only if the husband is dominant.** Neither partner likes the arrangement when the wife is dominant, possibly because this represents too extreme a departure from traditional male and female roles."³
- Notice the usage of the word **dominant**. The world sees the Biblical view of gender roles in the marriage as the husband being dominant.
- That has both negative and positive connotations. With this usage, they are talking about the husband making all the decisions about who does what in the relationship.
- They would see the wife, in a traditional marriage, as a subordinate and unstable.
- Interestingly, they also say "**It is common knowledge that when couples fight and eventually break up,** they do so over seemingly trivial issues. Clearly, it's not disagreements over the dinner menu or the remote control that lead a couple to divorce. **It's the disagreements over who is in charge and who isn't, and the stress and disruption that come along with these disagreements. Couples with unresolved dominance may last for a while, maybe even forever, but their relationship is inherently unstable.**"⁴
- So what is this author saying (he is an evolutionary biologist at University of Chicago) here?
- We know that couples fight and when they do, they will eventually break up. We know that most couples fight because they disagree about who is in charge in the relationship.

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/games-primates-play/201205/are-you-dominant-or-subordinate-in-your-romantic-relationship>

- Instead of giving any actual working counsel, the author simply states that the submissive partner must find stability from accomplishments of their own goals and find ways to compensate for their lack of power.
- If they are not able to do this, then the relationship is over.
- The world has no help and no hope. They do a great job of pointing out some of the issues but not giving any direction as to how it should be worked on.

What are Biblical roles?

- When speaking of roles, the world, as was just shown, focuses on what a person does, practically.
- Biblical roles are more than what we do. It also includes a spiritual aspect.
- When it comes to housework, there is nothing in the Bible that says a woman must vacuum and a man must be able to shingle the house. If one does the other, then the couple is not in sin.
- There is nothing which speaks of balancing the books or taking care of the money. Hopefully one of you is good with basic accounting and can put together a budget.
- While these are areas of the marriage which need to be taken care of, they are not always assigned to men or to women in a Biblical way.
- When the Bible speaks of roles, it goes far beyond what we *do* daily and gets into the heart of *who we are* in God's sight and what is in our own hearts.

The Roles and Responsibilities in a Household according to Scripture

<u>ROLES</u>	<u>RESPONSIBILITIES</u>	<u>TEXTS</u>
Fathers	Provide for family, children	2 Cor. 12:14
	Ensure proper nurture and discipline	Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21. Heb. 12:6
Mothers	Raising of children, motherhood	1 Tim. 2:15
	Managing the home	1 Tim. 5:14
Children	Obedience to parents	Eph. 6:1–3; Col. 3:20
	Care for parents in old age	1 Tim. 5:8 ⁵

⁵ D. Jones and A. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (IL: Crossway, 2010), 111.

The role of the wife⁶

- 1) While marriages should be strong, **young women need other significant relationships. They need to be mentored by older women endowed with life experience and the skill and wisdom that come from years of practicing Christian virtues.**
- **Titus 2:3-5 “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.”**
- 2) Love of husbands comes **before** love of children (note the sequence “love their husbands and children” in Titus 2:4). Putting love for husband first is important, since it allows parents to model a healthy and biblical marriage relationship before their children (cf. Prov. 14:26).
 - **If a couple’s marriage relationship is neglected, their parenting and the entire family will likely suffer as a result as well.**
- 3) **Wives are called both to love and to submit to their husbands.** Their submission is not to be grudging or perfunctory but loving and willing. **Ephesians 5:21–33** links wives’ submission with respect for their husband. **Respect does not mean uncritical adoration, just as submission does not mean subservience.**
- 4) **Women need self-control in dealing with their husbands and children.**
- 5) Women’s hearts are to be pure and their attitude toward others in the home is to be kind.
- 6) Women are to be devoted first and foremost to the home.
- 7) To our age, when devotion to married life and childrearing is often disparaged, **Paul speaks of the blessing God has in store for women who defy secular stereotypes and focus on their God-given calling related to family and the home.**
- 8) The desired result of proper wifely submission and diligent homemaking will be that no one will revile the Word of God (cf. **1 Peter 3:16**).
 - In other words, wives who live by these principles will make it harder for unbelievers to say bad things about Christianity, and perhaps this will open the door to communicating the gospel to them.
- “There’s a beautiful equilibrium in the way God has designed the family to function. Husband and wife are one. Men may have the role and responsibility of spiritual headship, but in many ways, the woman has the most powerful and lasting influence in the lives of family members. [Speaking of 1 Timothy 2:11-15] What Paul meant is that women are saved from insignificance and frustration by their role in the home and the

⁶ D. Jones and A. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (IL: Crossway, 2010), 110–111.
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family. God has given them a powerful influence that equals and, in many ways, exceeds the impact of the husband's headship."⁷

- Paul outlines three main verses for wives in Ephesians 5:22-24 “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.**”
- The idea of being submissive *is not regulated to wives only*.
- Ephesians 5:21 “...and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”
 - Notice that this verse comes right before **verse 22** that we just read. **Verse 21** is actually the capstone for what Paul was previously teaching on in **Ephesians 5**.
 - When you go back to the start of this section, it is **verse 18** “**And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.**”
 - Paul is linking our subjection to one another with being filled with the Spirit.
 - “In other words, *submission* is the single principle that sums up the character of a truly Spirit-filled person. It is the key and capstone of the Spirit's work in our hearts.”⁸
- The life of the believer in general should be characterized by submissiveness. **Philippians 2:3-4** “**Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with 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.**”
- We are to be like Christ in how we treat and view one another.
- But we should not misuse or misunderstand what the principle is and how it is taught. God has placed a structure in place for the family and for the church.
- Notice the qualifications for a wife to be submissive. This is not a general call to all women in all places.
- She is to be submissive to **her own husband...not to all husbands or men**.
 - This means men are not automatically elevated to higher status than women, that is unbiblical.
 - In other words, the family itself is the primary arena in which a godly woman is to cultivate and demonstrate the attitude of humility, service, and sacrifice called for in **verse 21**.⁹
- It is also a command to all wives, not just those who have “good” husbands.
 - The command is to **all** wives of all husbands. She is not to wait until he is a man that she deems as being good enough to submit to.
- We talked about this in the first class, but it needs to be repeated.

⁷ John MacArthur, *The Fulfilled Family: God's Design for Your Family* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 2005), 27-28

⁸ Ibid. p. 7

⁹ Ibid. p. 31.

- “Notice also that the word submit is not the word obey. What it calls for is an active, deliberate, loving, intelligent devotion to the husband’s noble aspirations and ambitions. It does not demand blind, fawning, slavish kowtowing to his every whim. The Greek word for “obey” would be hupakouo, and that is what Paul demanded of children in 6:1 and slaves in 6:5. But a wife is neither a child nor a slave, waiting on her husband while he sits in an easy chair and issues commands (“Hand me the remote!” “Get me something to drink!” “Fix me a snack!” “Fetch my slippers!” “Go to the store for me, will ya?”). Marriage is a much more personal and intimate relationship than that. It’s a union, a partnership, a singular mutual devotion, and that truth is emphasized by the words “your own husband.”¹⁰

The role of mother¹¹

- The apostle Paul taught that one of the primary roles of women is that of “childbearing,” that is, not only the act of giving birth but their domestic role related to the upbringing of children and managing of the home (1 Tim. 2:15; cf. 5:14).
- Thus, motherhood is not disparaged in biblical teaching; contrary to many in modern society, it is held up as the woman’s privilege.
- This exposes the unbiblical nature of a feminism that promotes gender equality understood as sameness and encourages women to forsake their calling in the home for the sake of finding self-fulfillment in a career outside the home.
 - Realize what the author is saying, he is not saying *women don’t have a job*, rather, are you content with the role that God has given you in your own home.
 - If you can take care of the home as God has commanded and have a job outside the home, then by all means, do so. There is nothing which would prohibit a woman from working.
 - Paul is talking about matters of the heart...the motivation behind the decisions we make.
- In fact, 1 Timothy 2:15 speaks a powerful message to our culture “where many are seeking to ‘liberate’ women from all encumbrances of family responsibilities in order to unleash them on a quest for self-fulfillment apart from such functions.” To the contrary, “it is precisely by participating in her role pertaining to the family that women fulfill their central calling.”
- This is not a matter of seeking to restrict women to the home, but of determining the essence of women’s calling from God and of encouraging them to live it out.
- This will result not only in greater blessing and fulfillment for women themselves but also for their husbands and families, and it will bring honor to the God who created us male and female.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 32.

¹¹ D. Jones and A. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (IL: Crossway, 2010), 109.