

**“Male Roles”**

Ephesians 5:22-28

Have you ever seen a “train wreck” in some sort of live production but couldn’t stop it? As you sit and watch the performance, you notice something just isn’t right. There is a small glitch that begins to affect more and more of the performers or individuals involved with the event. Usually the performance is spoiled and ends prematurely. And you’re helpless to do anything about it.

Often we see “train wrecks” coming when we look at other marriages and family situations, but feel hopeless to stop them. We see minor glitches or growing flaws that will rapidly become a crisis, and it is hard to know how to respond.

We live in a society and culture that seem to push against any attempt to define responsibilities in terms of male or female roles. It isn’t too surprising that our society would have trouble understanding proper roles in marriage when it wants to redefine the institution itself. For the follower of Christ, God’s plan for male and female roles in marriage is important to learn so we can honor Him and avoid tragic mistakes.

It is important to remember that in our families we are all created as individuals who share the same image of God. We are equal in worth before God. Men are not more special to God than women. What is different is how we understand our primary roles.

To understand the Bible’s specific roles in marriage, Ephesians 5:22-28 is a good place to start. The whole passage revolves around essential roles for both the husband and the wife. Here we find direction in determining the appropriate roles in families. More to the point, this passage shows us that God’s plan is for us to embrace the unique roles He has given us.

The first statement about specific male roles is found in verses 22 and 23: “Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church. He is the Savior of the body.” Being the head of the family, the figurative and spiritual leader, is a position that God has uniquely designed for men. Godly women truly want to be led by their husbands. When we lead through service and humility, our families will enthusiastically accept that leadership. Our world does not necessarily endorse this view. For men who want to fulfill their role as the leaders of their homes, the first step will be to seek that position through the humility and service that Paul talks about in the passage.

Then Paul pauses to give us needed perspective, “Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, to make her holy, cleansing her in the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:24-26). Our primary responsibility as head of the household is tender in light of Jesus’ example. There is an immediate spiritual sealing in the relationships between the Church and Christ and a wife and husband.

Our marriages are a human expression of the coming union of Christ and the church. As we long for our future mates, we can know that Christ longs for us, the church, in that manner as well.

While God gives us the role of leader within the family, we are not to override the wishes and calling of our spouse, or even our children. Sometimes in families the male leader will take his God-given authority, turn it into a hunting license, and proceed to snipe anyone who gets in his way. There are no grounds within Scripture for a man to emotionally, physically, or spiritually abuse his family. Those behaviors will suffer a strong judgment.

Going a bit further, Paul continues to describe the primary roles for men in their home by contrasting them with what Jesus Christ did for the church during His ministry. “He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself” (Ephesians 5:27-28). God’s plan for husbands is that we are willing to sacrifice ourselves to uphold the honor and virtue of our wives.

This applies not only to our future marriage relationships but our current and future dating relationships, too. Christ’s primary concern, according to Paul, is that He would be able to present the church to Himself in a pure way. Our primary concern leading up to marriage should be similar. We should anticipate the day of our marriage, and up until then, we should maintain godly levels of purity in our dating relationships. As men it is our spiritual obligation to the women we are dating and will date to keep appropriate sexual boundaries in place. Inappropriate sexual misconduct is an immediate disqualifier for spiritual authority and leader-

ship in the church and in our relationships. If we are crossing boundaries that should be in place until marriage, we are giving up our authority to lead and destroying the virtue of another man's bride.

Paul's entire discussion about primary male responsibilities uses a word that gets a lot of attention. He commonly uses the word "head" in his discussion of male and female roles. For Paul the term applies to men and women as well as the church and Jesus Christ. Notice how Paul talks about the "headship" of Jesus Christ a few verses earlier in Ephesians. "But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head--Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part" (Ephesians 4:14-16).

The "headship" that Paul is talking about relates directly to our conversation. Just as men have a God-given role as the leaders of their families and homes, Jesus Christ has a God-given role as head of the church. Husbands are directly accountable to the leadership of Jesus Christ in their home. Anytime a man abuses the authority granted to him by God, he directly denies the leadership and "headship" of Jesus Christ in his life. Peter remarks about men like this when he writes, "Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives with understanding of their weaker nature yet showing them honor as co-heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). Men who abuse their authority and trample their families underfoot walk a dangerous line. It's a line that leads us away from God and breaks our relationship with Him.

As a man we've been given the unique responsibility of one day leading our family on mission with God. Unfortunately, many men in the church today have forfeited this responsibility. But what if our generation changed this? Imagine the people led to Christ by families led by godly men to accomplish the Great Commission.

Just look at the life of William Carey, who led his whole family to the mission field in India in 1792. Through their example and because of their ministry, the Gospel of Jesus Christ was spread throughout that country. The family's impact on missions has been profound. We need more William Careys who are willing to lead their families into everyday missions for the glory of God.

We've been called to be the spiritual and moral leaders in our homes and exercise God-given authority by serving those around us. Spiritual leadership is an intimidating task. It is, however, a task that is God-given and must be upheld with the highest moral and Christian standards.

### Talk It Up:

1. Reading Ephesians 5:22-28, what else do you see Paul talking about in terms of primary male roles in the home?
2. How are men supposed to be spiritual leaders in the home? What are some examples?
3. Why do we have a hard time talking about the roles of men and women?
4. What are some characteristics of leadership you need to develop?
5. How have your actions, words, or thoughts this week affirmed the "whole purpose of God" in your life? (Acts 20:27)
6. How has your mindset and/or actions reflected God's missional purpose for you this week? (Acts 20:29)
7. How has God's Word built you up this week? (Acts 20:32)

### Prayer Requests:

- Pray that God will show you how your current relationships are leading you to, or away, from godly leadership experience.
- Pray for your future spouses and families that they may see you as a devoted leader in that God-given role.
- Ask God to open the hearts of specific people in your life who need a relationship with Jesus. Commit to pray regularly for them.
- Pray for God to start a spiritual awakening on your campus and on college campuses across North America and around the world.
- Take time to pray for any personal requests that group members may have.