

God's Design For a Christian Home

If you are planning to build a house, what is one of the first things you would do? You would hire an architect to draw up the blueprints, design the house the way you want it to be. Once the blueprints are drawn, you hire a contractor to oversee the building of the house. What if the contractor decided to change the design because he didn't like it? You would say, "Uh! Uh! This is my house, my design. You have no right to change it."

Who came up with the design for the Christian home, the Christian marriage? Our first reading gives us the answer. God did when he instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden. Since he is the one who instituted and designed marriage, no one, not even the Supreme Court of the United States, has the right to change it. Marriage is a lifelong union of one man and one woman. That's God's design. That point is made even clearer in our text where God speaks about the roles of husbands and wives in the Christian home. From Paul's inspired words, let's take some time to look at **God's Design for a Christian Home**. God designed the Christian home in which the husband is the servant leader and the wife the servant helper.

Paul begins by addressing the role and responsibility of the wife with these words. ***Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*** If I spoke these words to the National Organization of Women, how do you think they would react? Tomatoes being thrown, tar and feathering are a couple of things that come to mind. They would vehemently object to this archaic, backward, chauvinistic way of thinking. The year is 2015 not the year 15. The equal rights era has been around for many years. There is no way a woman should assume such a demeaning role of submission. How degrading and terrible for a woman's self-esteem!

Remember, first of all, these aren't Paul's words. Paul was speaking God's Word to the Christians in Ephesus; people who have the love of Christ in their hearts. Secondly, we need to look at what God's design for the wife's role really involves. As Christians, you and I would agree that Christ is the designated head of the church. As our head, we humbly and willingly submit to him. In other words, we look at our role not as degrading or demeaning but one of loving service to him because of the unselfish sacrifice he made for us on the cross of Calvary where he won our forgiveness and salvation. A wife is to look at her role in the home in the same way, as that of a servant helper. We heard that in our first reading when God said in the Garden of Eden, ***It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.*** The wife's role is to recognize her husband as the God-designated leader and submit to his leadership. What does that mean? Let me explain it this way. Let's say I have a million dollar diamond necklace that I give to you to hold on to and to keep safe. I say to you, "I trust you enough for you to hold on to this for me. I'm a little scared and it's hard for me to let go of this and yet I'm going to trust that you won't do anything to it without talking to me first." In a sense, this is what it means for a wife to submit to her husband. She says to him, "I am going to let you hold me and take care of me. I'm a little scared because I want to be my own boss but I am going to recognize and respect you as the leader of our home. I am going to trust that you

won't make any decisions without thinking about me, talking to me and letting us come to some sort of an agreement together. I am going to trust that you won't use your leadership to be selfish or to hurt me in any way."

This is how a wife submits to her husband. Is this always easy for her to do? No. A woman has a sinful pride that wants to be in charge and can come up with objections for not submitting. How can I respect my husband when he doesn't always deserve my respect? How can I trust my husband when he hasn't always been trustworthy and has disappointed me? How can I recognize him the leader of our home when he doesn't always lead the way I think he should? Those are good questions! Here's the good answer. **Submit to your husbands as to the Lord.** You do this because you know it's God's design for the Christian home which he will bless. You do this because this is how you best serve your Savior. You do this knowing your Savior will be there to forgive you when you fail to be the servant helper and to forgive your husband when he fails and disappoints you. You respect him as the leader out of reverence for Christ.

Now it's time to flip the coin and look at the role God has given to husbands. **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body.** Do you notice how Paul begins? "Love your wives," not "rule over them or dominate them." The Greek word here for love is what we call agape love. It's not the love of a friend or a love referring to physical attraction. It's unselfish, undeserving, the kind of love God has for us that moved Jesus to leave his throne in heaven; a love that moved him to live, suffer and die to pay for our sins so that we could be cleansed of our sins through the washing of water and the Word; to make us holy and spotless in God's sight so that we could live with him one day in heaven.

Husbands, this is the kind of love you are to show your wives. You submit to your wives as servant leaders when you pattern your love for your wives after the same kind of unselfish, sacrificing love that Jesus has for you. As a husband, you need to realize what a special treasure God has given you, a treasure worth more than the million dollar necklace I mentioned earlier. The only one that is to have a greater place in your heart is God. Your wife is to be more important than you, your family and friends, career, money, fishing, hunting and anything else. This doesn't mean husbands shouldn't work or spend time with family and friends, or fish and hunt but none of them should take priority. With every decision that is made, with everything you as a husband does, you need to ask, "How does this affect my wife?" It's all part of loving your wife as Christ loved the church. Jesus' shoes are big shoes to fill. Yet it is the role God has designed for husbands as the servant leaders. Paul put it into perspective when he wrote, **He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.** This kind of love has no stipulations whatsoever. God didn't say, "Husbands, love your wives only when they are loveable and treat you right." Just think what it would be like if God took that approach with us! Yikes! What does Christ's example of love mean for our daily lives? When your wife is a little crabby (and wives you will have to admit that happens at times), you will give her a little space and deal with

her gently and patiently. When she seems like she has no time for you and isn't giving you the attention you think she should, don't be stubborn and give her the cold shoulder and silent treatment. When she isn't feeling very loveable, make her feel loved with your words and actions. Why? Because you are a forgiven child of God who finds comfort in the unselfish love of Christ that you are to imitate.

As I look at my God-designed role in the Christian home, I have a confession to make. I sin against my wife more than any other person in the world. She is the one I interact with the most every day and sometimes, more often than I want or like, my sinful flesh rears its ugly head and prevents me from being the servant leader God wants me to be. When I feel ignored by her, I get crabby and ornery. If I have had a rough day, I can become short with her as though it were somehow her fault. I don't always take what she says in the kindest possible way. I don't say words like "I love you" or "I'm sorry" as often as I should and don't always show it with my actions. I spend way too much time thinking about what she could do to make me happy instead of thinking what I could do to make her happier. In other words, I am guilty of being selfish again and again. Husbands, are you in the same boat as me? I think so. Wives, aren't you also guilty of sinning against your husbands more than any other person in the world?

Why would God ever forgive such undeserving servant helpers and leaders? Why doesn't he just send us all to hell where we deserve to be? It's his agape love. Even though we are filthy and stained with sin, Jesus' holy precious blood cleanses us of all our sins and we are presented to God as a radiant church with no stains, wrinkles or blemishes.

My friends, we live in a society where God's Word is being trashed. So is God's beautiful institution of marriage and his design for a Christian home. Yet, God has given us his Word as a blessing because it is the message of sin and grace, the message that Jesus is the only Savior from sin; the only message that saves. God in his wisdom has also designed the Christian home to be a blessing, a home in which the husband and wife work together as a team, each assuming his or her God-given designed role, the wife the servant helper and the husband the servant leader. Paul summarized it well for us in the last verse. ***The husband must love his wife as he loves himself and the wife must respect her husband.*** May God bless our congregation with loving husbands and respecting wives who submit to one another out of reverence for Christ! Amen.