

Biblical Gender Roles – Part 4

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Brethren, over the last couple of months we've been working our way through a sermon series on the subject of biblical gender roles. As I've mentioned several times throughout this series, this is a very large topic. So, it has been taking multiple sermons to cover this particular subject. Last time in part 3, we started covering the role of men. And, I mentioned as I was closing last time, we're going to pick up with another sermon covering the role of men.

Generally speaking if we look at the role of men in terms of fulfilling the role that God defines for us in the Bible, there are two major ditches that men can fall into in not properly fulfilling this role. Those of you that know me well know I love to describe the human condition as "We see the middle of the road as we jump from one ditch to the other." So, what we're going to do today is pick up where we left off last time in focusing on the role of men. If you would like a title for this sermon, it is:

Biblical Gender Roles – Part 4

As I mentioned, men can fall into two major ditches getting off track in fulfilling the role that God defines for us in the Bible. The first ditch we talked about last time in part 3. That is, as I phrased it, "the perpetual adolescent." One of the phrases I used last time was "boys who can shave." In other words, You wind up with men who are adults in terms of the years that they've lived, but their spiritual and emotional maturity is more that of an adolescent. In other words, they never really mature. They just abdicate the role of a masculine leader.

The other ditch that men can fall into is the opposite extreme. Instead of abdicating the role of a masculine leader, they certainly take on the role of leadership, but they don't do it in a godly fashion. They do it more for self-gain to the expense of others and do it more, you might say, as a dictatorial tyrant. It's more from a self-interest point of view where those that are under them and under their leadership really suffer. They are fulfilling this role as a self-motivated, self-seeking type of role. That's more what we are going to focus on today in part 4.

To start with, I'd like to take some time to look at a prophecy that God spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden that foretells for us some of the issues that would come about in relationships between the genders as a result of rebellion against God. We'll start off by turning to Genesis 3 to look at this particular prophecy. We're going to focus on verse 16, particularly the last sentence in verse 16. Before we do that, I'd like to set the scene here because, as we're going to see when we start digging into this scripture in detail, context is going to play a very important role in understanding this particular verse and what it actually says to us.

To understand the scene and what's happening here—I'm sure we're all familiar with the story of Adam and Eve in the garden in the book of Genesis. God creates Adam and Eve. He places them in the garden and gives them one major rule. The tree in the middle of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, don't touch that one. Don't eat of it. Leave that one alone. Everything else is yours.

So, of course, when Satan sets out to trip them up, his objective is to get them to violate that one rule. And he is successful in doing so. Satan approaches them. He gets Eve to take it first. She then gets Adam to take a part of it, but all of them rebel.

What happens here in this part of Genesis 3 is that God is going down the row, discussing with all of them "Because of your involvement in this rebellion, these are the consequences you will suffer as a result of your part in this event." Again, that's very important to understand. There are three conversations here, but we're only going to look at God's conversation with Eve. First God talks to Satan. Then God talks to Eve, and lastly God addresses Adam. In every case, what God discusses with them is "Because of your part in this rebellion and disobeying Me, these are the consequences you will face in the future as a result of this action." You'll see in a minute why I'm putting so much emphasis on the context here. This is going to become very important in understanding the sentence we're going to look at here.

Let's start in Genesis 3:16.

Genesis 3:16. *To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; ... (NKJV)*

Now notice this last sentence.

16b) ... your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."
(NKJV)

As we're going to see here in a minute, this is a prophecy that would foretell for us some of the major problems that would happen in the relationship between the genders as a result of rejecting God. In order to understand this last sentence completely, we're going to have to do some digging to know exactly what this is saying. The way this verse is worded in English doesn't make clear the meaning that's intended here.

Before we do some digging, I'd to address one popular misconception that you oftentimes hear, particularly in the Protestant world today, about this scripture. This scripture is used to promote the idea that the roles within the family—meaning the husband being the head of the family and being the head of the wife—didn't come about until Adam and Eve sinned and those roles are a result of sin. They then turn around and suggest the idea that once Christ came, paid the penalty for sin, and starts the New Testament church, then these roles go away and it's all about equality now. However, if you read the New Testament, this is obviously a false idea.

When you read Paul and Peter's writings on the subject of gender roles, it's very clear that they teach the same thing in terms of God having assigned appropriate roles, particularly if you look at 1 Corinthians 11 and what Paul teaches in that chapter. Paul specifically goes back to talk about the order of creation, saying from the very beginning when God created Adam before Eve, God had this structure in mind. So understand the concept of biblical gender roles arising as a result of sin is a false idea.

Now, let's try to understand what this sentence really tells us. What does it mean here when it says, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you"? How should we understand that?

First, let's begin by looking at the meaning of a couple of Hebrew words here. We're going to look at the Hebrew word for "desire" and the Hebrew word for "rule" to understand what they mean. Also, realize as we look at this that the definitions themselves are not going to tell us conclusively the full story. The context is going to play a very important role here. As I read the definitions, you'll see that mentioned.

Let's start with the Hebrew word that's translated as "desire" in the English. It's transliterated as tesuqah (tesh-oo-kaw'). It's Strong's #8669. And, according to The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker, here is how it's defined: *A feminine noun meaning longing. It was used to describe the strong feelings of desire that one person had for another, but it was not always a healthy desire.* Now, that's a very important concept that we're going to come back to. Now, continuing with Baker's definition: *As part of the judgment after Adam and Eve's sin, God said that a woman would long for her husband (Gen. 3:16). People are not the only thing that can long; God told Cain that sin was lying at his door desiring to enter (Gen. 4:7).* (Now that verse is going to be pivotal as well. We're going to compare that one in just a minute.) Notice here that Baker is saying this is a *strong desire one for another*, not necessarily a positive desire. It can be a positive desire. It can be a bad desire. It depends upon the context.

When we look at what the Hebrew word for "rule" means, we'll see that is a similar idea. Context plays a very important role. The Hebrew word translated here as "rule" is transliterated as masal (maw-shal'). It's Strong's #4910 and again, quoting from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker, here is how it's defined: *A verb denoting to rule, to reign, or to have dominion over. Although its general tone communicates leadership and authority, its specific nuance and connotation are derived from the context in which it appears.*

Now understand in both of these cases, we get a general idea of what the word can refer to, but the context plays a very important role in determining exactly how to take these terms.

With that in mind, let's also look back again at this word for desire (tesuqah). This word is only used three times in the entire Old Testament, twice in Genesis and once in the Song of Solomon. If we look at the use in the Song of Solomon, this word obviously

refers to a positive desire by the context. But we can learn more here if we look at how this word is used in the book of Genesis. Remember the book of Genesis was written by Moses. So, both of these usages are in the same book, written by the same author. We're also going to see that they're used very similarly. Notice in Genesis 3:16, which I'll just read again.

Genesis 3:16b. ... *your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.*" (NKJV)

We have desire and rule being contrasted with each other in this sentence structure. What we're going to find in Genesis 4:7 is a very similar comparison. These two words (desire and rule) are the same two Hebrew words. We have the same author and a similar sentence structure in terms of how they are compared with each other. We also have some similarities in context. What I mean by that is what we see addressed in Genesis 4 occurs after Cain has killed Abel. Cain has rebelled against God. He has sinned and committed murder and God is addressing that with Cain. Now, let's pick up here in chapter 4 verse 7.

Genesis 4:7. *If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door....* (NKJV)

Now notice this last sentence.

7b) ... And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." (NKJV)

Notice we have desire and rule contrasted with each other in a very similar context, a very similar way in how the words are used in Genesis 3:16. We have the same Hebrew words and we have the same author.

With the Hebrew word for desire, the definition said it could be a positive desire or it could be a negative desire depending upon the context. Think about how this word is being used. We're talking about sin's desire is for Cain. Would anybody want to argue that sin's desire for Cain is a warm, loving, nurturing desire to help him fulfill his life and to love and care for him? Absolutely not. No one would rationally make that argument because we're talking about sin here.

What would sin's desire be for Cain? Sin desires him all right. Sin wants to take over, control him, and dominate his life. Think about the analogies of what we use for sin. We compare sin to leaven. What does leaven do? Leaven gets into bread and it spreads throughout it, changing its nature. In those ways, leaven controls and dominates the bread. We also compare sin to Egypt, to slavery because in the springtime we talk about the analogy of coming out of sin like coming out of Egypt, coming out of slavery because sin is bondage. And again, sin wants to control and dominate your life.

Also, think about now the rule that Cain should have over sin. It says, "Sin's desire is for you. It wants to dominate and control your life and you should rule over it." Would anyone want to argue that type of rule would be a loving, understanding, self-sacrificing type of guidance and rule over sin? No, we're talking about sin here. You would want to rule over sin with your foot on its neck. You don't want to give it an inch. You want to squash it, hold it down, and suppress it because we're talking about sin.

Now think about these two definitions. Remember the sentence structure is very similar here as what we had in Genesis 3:16. We also have the same author, Moses, who is using both these words. Now let's add a bit more context. Remember, as I mentioned, what is being discussed in the latter part of Genesis 3 is God's conversations with Satan, Eve, and with Adam. In every one of them, it is "You have been a part of rebelling against God, of rejecting His lordship over you, and embracing Satan's carnal way of life and these are going to be the consequences to you as a result."

As a general rule, what does the carnal, satanic mind tend to do on most every subject regardless of the context? It's the opposite of whatever God says. Isn't it? Because if God says, "Go right," what's the carnal mind want to do? Go left. If God says, "Go left," the carnal mind wants to go right. If God says, "Do this." Then the carnal mind doesn't want to do it. If God says, "Don't do it," then that's the very thing the carnal mind wants to do. Whatever God says to do, then, the carnal mind wants to do the opposite.

Let's think about this. We're going to read the relevant scriptures in the New Testament in a moment, but God starts talking with Eve by saying "Your desire shall be to your husband." What are God's instructions to wives? What does God tell wives to do in a godly sense? As we're going to see here in a minute, God's instructions revolve around three major things. God always says, "Submit to your husbands. Respect your husbands. Obey your husbands."

What would be the opposite of that? That would be not respecting and obeying your husband. That would be fighting him for the role of leadership and wanting to control and dominate him and battle him for that—like the desire that sin would have for Cain. Because what does sin want to do? Sin wants to take over Cain's life, to control and dominate him. Sin doesn't want to love, nurture, and respect Cain.

Also, think about the other side. What does God tell husbands to do? What are the instructions? "Love your wives as Christ loved the Church. Dwell with understanding. Honor her as the weaker vessel." These are the scriptures we're going to look at in a moment.

What would be the opposite of that? That would be taking that leadership role, but wanting to do it not with love and kindness and understanding, but with harshness and oppression, similar to ruling over sin with your foot on its neck, squashing and suppressing it.

Think of this in that context. If you put all of this together, God was telling Eve "Because you have rejected God's way and you've embraced Satan's way, this is what's going to happen to gender roles." Again, if you just look at our society today, you can see this happening. What did God tell Eve? "Your desire is going to be for your husband." It's not going to be a warm, loving desire, because of the carnal satanic mind. It's going to be to want to fight your husband for that role of leadership. What do we have in our culture today? You see the very mention of "submission" is considered fighting words just to even talk about that subject. Because what is the natural desire? The carnal human mind doesn't want to go in a godly direction. It wants to do the opposite.

What have we seen largely throughout human history in terms of how men have treated women? Today, one of the major problems we have in our culture is the perpetual adolescent, the man who has been feminized and abandoned the traditional male role. We also see at times the oppressive, domineering man. Certainly if you look at world history—not only in our culture but also across the world and over time—one of the more common stories has been men utilizing their role as an oppressive, domineering, more authoritarian jerk. What God was foretelling was that rejecting His way of life and embracing Satan's mind would result in these kinds of problems. And that's what we've seen throughout time. Again, as I mentioned, what we're going to focus on today is the ditch that men can fall into by fulfilling that role in a carnal ungodly manner that results more in being an authoritarian dictator than being a loving servant.

What I find, particularly with men in the Church of God who tend to take this type of approach, is, in my opinion, they oftentimes selectively read the Bible. As we're going to see here, there are three major chapters in the New Testament that address the rules of gender roles and how the spouses should interact with each other. There are certainly other areas of the Bible that touch on this subject as well, but there are three core chapters we're going to look at. And every one of them has a similar format. They cover similar content and they even cover the same structure. They start off in every case addressing the role of the wife first, and the subject that is typically addressed right off the bat in each case is the issue of submission. Next time when we're talking more about the role of women, we'll get into why that is.

What I want you to see today is oftentimes what happens is these men will read over these particular scriptures—and they're big fans of quoting what the wife is supposed to do—but they typically stop reading there. So, they never focus on the rest of the instructions, which come afterwards that address how the husband should behave and what husbands are held responsible to do.

In fact, there is one particular gentleman I always think of when I think of this subject. He was a husband who acted like this and was very big on quoting these scriptures to his wife but really, quite frankly, ignored all the instructions to husbands and what he was supposed to fulfill. A mutual friend of ours one time was talking to me about this gentleman. He looked at me one day and he said, "Do you know, James, that guy doesn't need a wife. He needs a dog." Meaning this man's idea of being a husband was he got to sit on his throne and bark out orders and the wife was supposed to obey

just as if she was the dog. Quite frankly, I wouldn't want to be his dog either considering how this man would treat people. That is oftentimes who I think of when I think of the stereotypical husband like this.

As I mentioned, these men tend very often to read the Bible selectively. First, let's look at this by turning over to Ephesians 5, one of our go-to chapters on the subject of marriage. What we're going to do here as we look into these chapters is first look at the scriptures as they pertain to wives. Then we'll come back later to cover all the husbands' sections, but what we're going to see, in my opinion, is oftentimes these men only read the first couple of verses here and then they stop reading. They never focus on anything else. It starts here in Ephesians 5:22.

Ephesians 5:22. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23) For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

24) Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. (NKJV)

And these men particularly tend to love that phrase "in everything" at the end of verse 24. In fact, the gentleman I referred to earlier that I said I wouldn't want to be his dog, one of the things he loved to harp on were these particular scriptures in that "I am the boss in everything." Of course, he never read the rest of it about what he was supposed to do and how he was supposed to fulfill his role, but he just beat his chest, "Me in charge. Me Tarzan. You Jane" was his approach. We'll come back here in a little bit and cover the rest of this chapter.

There are three major chapters in the New Testament in particular that talk about the relationship of spouses to each other. They all cover a similar format. Ephesians 5 is one, and another is Colossians 3:18. And again, you'll notice every time this subject is addressed that it always addresses the wives first and it always addresses the subject of submission first. Again, we'll get into why that is later when we talk about the role of women. In verse 18, it says:

Colossians 3:18. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (NKJV)

This same theme plays out in 1 Peter, which is our other chapter. Turn to 1 Peter chapter 3 and we'll start here in verse 1.

1 Peter 3:1. [Likewise, you wives] be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

2) when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

3) Do not let your [beauty be the outward adorning or] arranging [of] the hair, [or the] wearing gold, or putting on [of] fine apparel —

- 4) *[but] let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible [ornament] of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.*
5) *For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,*
6) *as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. (NKJV)*

We have a similar format here where it addresses the wife first and then verse 7 goes ahead to address the husbands. We'll go through all the husbands' sections in just a minute. Notice here in chapter 3 that verse 1 started with the word "likewise." If you look in other translations of the Bible (I'm reading from the New King James translation), some of the other translations will word this "In a similar manner" or "In the same way."

What this word, likewise, refers to is the context of the scriptures leading up to this verse. Oftentimes the husbands, who love to selectively read this, particularly love this word likewise. The reason being if you look back to those scriptures that lead up to this in the latter part of 1 Peter chapter 2, Peter addresses the subject of submission in a couple of different contexts. The context just prior to where Peter begins addressing marriage is the subject of masters and slaves. In the first century church, in Asia Minor at that time, slavery was a common concept and occurrence. It was legal in that area. And at that time there were many individuals being called into the church who were slaves and others who were slave owners. That's one reason the New Testament addresses this particular subject because they were dealing with having both slaves and slave owners coming into the church and being converted.

One of the things mentioned in these scriptures leading into the beginning of 1 Peter chapter 3 is the idea of the responsibility of Christians, if they happen to be a slave, to be respectful and to be submissive to their master. Husbands who take an overly authoritarian approach love this because they look at this as "Me master. You slave. I get to bark out the orders and you have to take whatever I dish out." That's their context.

Not so fast because if you think about this, there were two contexts of submission that are mentioned in the previous chapter leading up to 1 Peter 3:1. Let's turn over to 1 Peter chapter 2 and begin in verse 13. The first subject mentioned is the issue of submission to civil government. Peter will address here the responsibility of Christians to be submissive to civil authorities who are in governmental and leadership offices in whatever area you live in. Peter explains that God has established this order and it is a Christian's responsibility to be submissive to the leaders. Let's learn something from this. In verse 13, Peter says:

1 Peter 2:13. *Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,
14) or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.*

- 15) *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men —*
16) *as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.*
17) *Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. (NKJV)*

Notice Peter is talking again about the Christian responsibility to be submissive and obedient to civil government. Whoever the civil leaders are in the particular area that you live in, we have a responsibility to respect that authority because God has placed them in that role and we should be obedient. Also, notice here Peter says "to every ordinance of man." That's an interesting phrase. Doesn't that sound very similar to what we read in Ephesians 5 when it says, "Be submissive to your husband 'in everything'"? Here Peter says, "Every ordinance of man."

Now, let's notice from Peter's own example that there are limits to this concept. Remember the apostle Peter wrote this letter. He's the one who stated "every ordinance of man." Now let's turn over to the book of Acts to notice from Peter's own example that there are limits to this concept. Turn to Acts 4 where we're going to pick up in verse 13 and we're going to read a couple of segments out of a larger context. For time's sake, let me summarize what is taking place here.

As you know, Jesus Christ sent out the apostles. He placed them in this role and sent them out with instructions. Jesus told them to go out to preach the gospel to the world. The apostles were also empowered to perform miracles. So, the apostles are healing people. They're performing a number of miracles that are catching people's attention. In fact, the context directly here is that they have healed some people and this has caught the attention of the civil and religious leaders of their time. These leaders perceive the apostles as a threat to their power because when the apostles began performing healings like that, people started paying attention and the apostles became popular. This was what was happening with Peter and John. They were being noticed for the miracles they had performed. People were taking notice and Peter and John were gaining some notoriety. And the civil and religious leaders are seeing these miracles as a threat to their power. Let's notice how they respond to this.

Acts 4:13. *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*

14) *And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.*

15) *But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,*

16) *saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.*

17) *But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."*

18) So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19) But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.

20) For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

21) So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

22) For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed. (NKJV)

Notice these were the civil and religious leaders of the time and they had just given Peter and John an ordinance of man commanding them "You shouldn't preach like this anymore. We want you to cease and desist and to stop from doing this." As we're going to see, the religious and civil leaders have authority because later they have Peter and John thrown into jail. This happens later in the next chapter.

You can see here from the reaction of the apostles that they're trying to be respectful of the civil and religious leaders, but they're giving them a heads up that "We're not going to submit to this. That's not how this is going to work." And, in fact, the apostles don't submit. They go on, continue preaching, and get themselves thrown into jail as a result. That happens over in chapter 5. Then what happens is God springs them out of jail. God sends an angel and has the apostles supernaturally released from jail. Then, of course, the apostles go back out, start preaching, and doing what God told them to do. So, the apostles have more encounters with the civil and religious leaders. Let's pick up now in verse 22 of Acts chapter 5.

Acts 5:22. *But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported,*

23) saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" (NKJV)

This is because God had sent an angel to spring them out of jail.

24) Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.

25) So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" (NKJV)

Notice the ordinance the apostles had been given was "You're not allowed to do this anymore. We're commanding you not to preach in Christ's name anymore." And what are the apostles doing? They're disobeying. They're out there doing the very thing they were told not to do.

26) *Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.*
 27) *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,*
 28) *saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"*
 29) *But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ... (NKJV)*

And notice this answer.

29b) *... "We ought to obey God rather than men.*
 30) *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.*
 31) *Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*
 32) *And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." (NKJV)*

Notice that the civil authorities in their area gave an ordinance of man. They directly told the apostles "We don't want you following the instructions Jesus Christ gave you. We forbid you from doing that." And what did Peter and the other apostles do? They refused to submit to the civil leaders. Realize what happened here. I'm not saying this is license that every time civil government issues a rule that you don't totally agree with or rubs you the wrong way that you can thumb your nose at it. I'm not saying that at all.

As we read in 1 Peter, God places the civil authorities in their roles and tells us we should submit to their leadership. But what the leaders were doing was grossly overstepping the bounds of the authority they had been given. And they're directly instructing the apostles to disobey God. What I want you to understand here is even though Peter said we should "submit to every ordinance of man" that wasn't a no holds barred command with no limitations or exceptions to it. It isn't that regardless of what you're told, you just have to obey no matter how outrageous or outlandish that is and whether that directly violates God's laws. No, when it got into that area, the apostles respectfully said, "Sorry, we can't follow you. We have to place God above your rules and you are outside your bounds." Notice the apostles were still respectful in how they tried to carry this out, but they didn't submit.

My whole point in this is realize when Peter gives the instructions in 1 Peter 3 regarding wives, he starts with what? "Likewise," in a similar manner, in the same way. He's referring back to this context. I'm not saying here that anytime a wife doesn't agree 100 percent with what her husband's decision is that she can thumb her nose at it. I'm not saying that because it does say to submit to your husband and it does say that he is the head and that he is in the leadership role. What I'm trying to get across is that this is not a no holds barred where he can dish out any abuse that he wants to however outrageous that is and the wife is obligated to just take whatever he dishes out. There

are limits to this concept. When God places people in a position of authority, in a role, he places parameters around that. There are appropriate uses and inappropriate uses of that authority.

That's important to remember because this is something in our history in the Church of God we have really gotten wrong at times. A particular example that comes to mind is how we tended to teach the subject of church government in the church. Let me tell you that I personally grew up in the Church of God my entire life. I was born in the late 60s so my formative years were through the 70s and 80s when I was growing up through my teen and early adult years. If you were in the Church of God at that time, you probably remember that one of the subjects that got hammered repeatedly all the time was the subject of church government. You would think logically as often as that subject was addressed and how dogmatically it was oftentimes put across that if there was any subject we really understood and had a good firm grasp on it was church government. In reality, if you look back and ask if there was any subject that we were off base in understanding, it was church government.

Let me just give you an example. I'll leave the names out of this, but I have distinct memories of my childhood growing up. There was a particular evangelist that if I mentioned the name, I'm sure lots of you would immediately recognize him. He visited the church area I grew up in regularly. I distinctly remember a time sitting, because I was probably in the first couple of rows of the congregation, watching. He was literally giving a sermon and gave the following example. This evangelist claimed that if church government (or if your pastor) told you to do something specifically, and the evangelist directly stated that even if that instruction violated God's instructions, the important thing for you as a member to do was to submit to that authority. You were to follow what you were being taught, what you were being told. If you did that, then God magically made it right somehow.

That is absolute heresy. It is heresy and idolatry to teach that any human being has the right to override God's instructions. No human being regardless of what title they want to claim for themselves ever has that kind of authority. God's word always reigns supreme. If anyone or any kind of authority tries to override God's word, then you override them. It always comes down to: We should obey God rather than men.

The point being that there are limits to authority. Is there a role for the ministry and is there authority and structure? Yes, there is. And the Bible does teach submission to that, again within godly parameters. But if church authority starts telling you to disregard God's commandments and you should put their instructions above God, then absolutely not! You should obey God rather than men.

I bring that up because we had a very warped view on that subject. Oftentimes this was transferred into other areas of husbands to wives or other areas of authority. The idea came across that since a person was in a leadership position, they could just dish out whatever they wanted to and everybody had to obey. That's not the case. There are limits to this concept, again within Biblical parameters.

Realize I'm not saying the idea that if someone is in an authority position over you and if there is anything that rubs you wrong, you can thumb your nose at that. I am not saying that. I am simply putting across the idea that we have to realize there are parameters upon this.

Also, specifically look at the roles of husbands and wives. Yes, the Bible is very clear that God has placed the husband as the head of the family. And then God tells wives and children they should submit to the husband's authority. But now let's look at how husbands are told to fulfill this role because, again, this is oftentimes what gets neglected by those men who want to beat their chest and think "Me in charge. Me master. You slave." That's now how it works.

Turn over to Colossians 3 and let's pick up here in verse 19, reading the sections we skipped over last time. Here is where we start with the instructions to husbands.

Colossians 3:19. *Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.* (NKJV)

I think we get a clearer definition if we read this scripture out of the New Revised Standard Version. What I just read to you is actually out of the New King James translation. If we read verse 19 out of the New Revised Standard Version, it says:

Colossians 3:19. *Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.* (NRSV)

That's a very important thing to remember because what Paul is talking about here is servant leadership. Paul is saying, "Yes, you are in a role of authority but that's never to treat someone harshly." Servant leadership is not about taking a position of leadership to use it for self-interests, in other words, to use it for my benefit. "I'm in charge and I've got the title. So I get to work things to my advantage at the expense of others." That is not how this is supposed to work out.

And this is a big point that Christ made with the apostles. When He was here on earth, He tried to get this concept through their heads. Oftentimes, if you follow the conversations, especially while Christ is still a physical human being on earth and the apostles are not converted, very often you hear them arguing: Who is going to be the greatest? Who is going to have the biggest title? Who is the biggest and the baddest? This is because the disciples are still thinking with a carnal mentality and Christ oftentimes corrects this attitude.

Turn over to Luke 22 and we'll start in verse 24.

Luke 22:24. *Now there was also a dispute [rivalry] among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.* (NKJV)

Notice the carnal, self-seeking, self-promoting type of mentality that they're coming from. This is just typical carnal, human nature in our world. Notice Christ is teaching them that this is the exact opposite of how you should approach leadership. In verse 25, Christ says:

25) And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'

26) But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

27) For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. (NKJV)

Christ was putting across the idea that the entire carnal attitude of using a position of leadership for self-interest at the expense of others is absolutely the wrong way to approach this. "You have it completely upside down." In our carnal world, as Christ was pointing out here, who is typically considered greater—the man sitting at the table having others serve his needs or the waiter, the one who's serving? Christ is saying, "In your world, it's typically the man sitting at the table, but look at what I'm doing." This is what Christ was pointing out.

Realize when you look at the logic of "Me master, you slave" if anybody could claim "Me master, you slave," it would be Jesus the Christ. Wouldn't it? This is the God of the Old Testament. He created the planet. He created Adam and Eve. He made mankind. He is the one who has run all of this for thousands of years. Not only this, but at the end of His physical life, He then sacrifices Himself as a ransom to save mankind. Not only did He create us, He bought and paid for us with His own life. If anybody can beat His chest and say, "Me master, you slave" it's Jesus Christ, but that's not how He's doing this. He says, "I'm one as one who serves. That's how I'm performing this role. I'm the boss but look how I'm fulfilling this role. I'm doing this as a servant for your benefit. And I'm taking the short end of the stick Myself."

If you dig into the scripture a little deeper to look at the meanings of some of the words here, it illustrates this even more. What I'd like to do is just share with you the meanings of some of the Greek words utilized in this particular verse.

Notice first of all, Christ said that those who exercise authority are called benefactors. Notice Christ doesn't say that they are benefactors; He said they are called benefactors. The Greek word used here translated as "benefactors" is "euergetes" (yoo-erg-et'-ace); Strong's # 2110. According to The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiro Zodhiates, it's defined as *One who does good, a benefactor. In the NT, used as a title of honor*. In other words, notice Christ didn't say, "They are benefactors." He said, "They're called benefactors." In other words, they're called people who do good.

Notice Christ talked about "They exercise lordship and authority." The word for "lordship" is the Greek word "kurieuo" (ko-ree-yoo'-o); Strong's #2961. Zodhiates

defines this as *to have or exercise rule or authority over, lord over. Spoken of things as exercising mastery over us.* Notice he talks about lording over and master like the "Me master, you slave" idea.

Now the word for "authority here is the Greek word "exousiazō" (ex-oo-see-ad'-zo); Strong's #1850. It's defined by Zodhiates as *authority, right, and power. To have or exercise power in the sense of permitting ... meaning that one has no separate power or liberty over his own body to use it as he will... To exercise authority, rule reign.... In the [passive], to be ruled by or be under the power of, to be in bondage to.* Notice this is very much the ruling over to suppress type of idea. Christ is trying to get across the idea that this is not how servant leadership works.

Let me just share with you a conversation I had with Harold Lee several years ago that pertains to this subject. The specific subject that Harold was addressing when we talked about this was not the role of husbands and wives, but I think the concept translates. Harold was talking about the role of being an elder and how this should be fulfilled. This was not long after I had been ordained and he was making a point to me about servant leadership.

I'll just state this to you the way Harold worded it to me. He looked at me and he said it like this, "James, if someone has to get the short end of the stick, that's supposed to be you." The concept, the idea he was getting across was that in a leadership role with this title, he said, "This isn't a situation where you can say, 'I have the title. I have the power. I can work things out to my advantage.'" Harold said, "No, no, no. That's backwards. Yes, you have the title. You're supposed to work it out where if someone gets, you might say, the crappy end of the deal, that's supposed to be you. If someone get's short-changed, you're supposed to be the guy to take that and you give the advantage to someone else." Harold was saying that's how this role should be fulfilled because that's what a servant leader is.

These are exactly the instructions that Paul gives us in Ephesians of what husbands are supposed to do and how they're supposed to fulfill the role as head of the family. If you turn over to Ephesians 5, we'll pick up in verse 25, the section we left off in last time addressing Paul's instructions to husbands.

Ephesians 5:25. *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for [it],*
26) *that He might sanctify and cleanse [it] with the washing of water by the word,*
27) *that He might present [it] to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that [it] should be holy and without blemish.*
28) *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.*
29) *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.*
30) *For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.*

- 31) *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."*
32) *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*
33) *Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (NKJV)*

Notice Paul says here the way to fulfill this role as head of the family is the way that Christ loved the church. How does Christ interact with the church? Did He just sit on His throne, beat His chest, and bark out orders and say, "Do this for My advantage?" No, this is the spirit being who gave up His omnipotent position where He couldn't feel any pain, He couldn't be hurt, was sitting on His throne. He gave all that up, became a physical human being, had His name dragged through the mud, was maligned by others, was betrayed, arrested, beaten, tortured, and murdered by those for whom He was going through all this for. That gives you an idea of what Christ was doing. He took the short end of the stick and when someone had to take the short end of the stick, Christ volunteered to do that. He suffered all of that for the benefit of His potential spouse. Who was He doing this for? For the Bride of Christ, for those that would marry Him. This is how He fulfilled the role.

Again, Christ didn't orchestrate this role for His own benefit. It's volunteering to be the one who throws Himself under the bus for the benefit of others. That's what being a servant leader is. Look at the example of Christ in John 13 to see the example that He set at the very end of His life. We very often read these scriptures at Passover. We're going through this because this is the foot washing ceremony. We're going to pick up on the part where Christ explains this after He has done it. And it's important to also look at the context of this.

This happens in the evening right before Christ is about to be betrayed, arrested, and killed. Keep in mind that He is the God of the Old Testament. He inspired Isaiah what to write. So, Christ knows in graphic detail what is about to happen to Him. In spite of all of that, He takes the time that evening right before all this happens to go through this ceremony with the apostles and to serve them. Again, if anyone can say, "I'm master, you're slave," it's Christ, but what is He doing? He's not saying, "I'm the big dog in charge. Wash My feet." He's getting down and washing their feet. Notice what He does here in John 13:12.

- John 13:12.** *So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"*
13) *You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.*
14) *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*
15) *For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.*
16) *Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.*
17) *If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (NKJV)*

Again, Christ is setting the example of "You call me Lord and Master and that is right. That's who I am, but notice I got down and I washed your feet. And I want you to follow the same example." Christ is in the leadership position and He's humbling Himself to serve others. This is the example when Paul says, "Love your wives as Christ loved the church," this is what Christ did for the church. It wasn't a matter of just beating His chest saying, "I'm in charge and everyone has to do what I say." Yes, there is a leadership and there is an authority role. Don't get me wrong. But again, this is what servant leadership looks like. It's taking the short end of the stick to be able to serve others and for the benefit of others. That's how this role is to be fulfilled.

This is what Peter is also getting at. If you would, turn back over 1 Peter 3. We'll pick up with another section of scripture here where we skipped over the husband's part. 1 Peter 3 and we'll pick up in verse 7.

1 Peter 3:7. *[Likewise, you husbands] dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. (NKJV)*

Notice Peter talks about "dwelling with understanding." Again, this is showing love and understanding to the wife. Also think of it like this: You're dealing with another individual, who by design is created to be wired to think and to react very differently than yourself because that's just who we are. There was a popular book that came out a number of years ago called Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus. Just the title of it tells us some interesting things. It suggests the idea that we're from different planets. If you think about men and women and how we function, how we think, how we emotionally respond to things, it's very similar to being from different planets because we're wired very differently. We just have very different perspectives of life.

The important thing to remember here is if you are going to dwell with understanding with another individual who is wired so incredibly different from yourself, the only way you're going to successfully do that is by spending time listening to them, paying attention to them, and listening to what they have to say so you understand their perspective and know where they're coming from.

This is not only very important in just getting along with each other, but you also have to remember what Peter says in this verse. He says, "that your prayers may not be hindered." Let me just put it bluntly what God is saying here. He's saying, If you don't listen to her, I don't listen to you. God works from the rule of "with the same measure you use, it shall be measured back to you." He particularly tends to do this if you are in a position of authority. He's saying, "If you mistreat those who are under you, guess what? I'll play by the same rules. And the same thing you dish out to them I'm going to dish out to you." You really want to think about that in how you treat other people.

As I oftentimes love to joke, if that's not a motivation to be nice to people, I don't know what is. If you think about it, God is going to pay us back. Let me tell you that you don't want to play games with this. I don't have time to go through some graphic stories here,

but I could tell you some graphic examples of how God has illustrated this principle of "With what measure you use, it shall be measured back to you." I've seen this come out in some very scary ways where people mistreated others who were in vulnerable situations and, later in graphic detail, very similar nasty trials came upon them with uncanny detail of the same situations played out on them that they had orchestrated to other people. I've seen people lose their lives over this. You just don't want to play this game.

Just think about it this way. Do you really want an all-powerful God with unlimited power and influence who is angry and on a mission to teach you a painful lesson? I just don't think you want to be there. It's a scary place to be. So, when you think about this, "If you're not listening to your wife, then God isn't listening to you," really think about that in terms of how you're going to treat her.

Another important thing to realize in looking at gender roles is if you look at the instructions on both sides of the equation—how men are told to treat their wives and how wives are taught to interact with their husbands—they speak to the primary emotional needs of the spouse in both cases. If you notice with husbands, it's "Love your wives. Dwell with understanding." For women, typically primary emotional needs are to feel loved and understood. Those are very big deals. Again, we'll look at the other side in more detail when we look at women, but if you notice the instructions to women, these revolve around the concept of respect. You'll see the idea of submit to your husbands, respect, and obey. It all revolves around the idea of respect because for most men the primary emotional need they have is to be respected. Again, we'll get into that in more detail next time.

If you focus on this in terms of men, the instructions we're given are, "Love your wives as Christ loved the church and dwell with understanding" because these are primary emotional needs for a woman. To understand this concept all you have to do is stop and think for a minute. If you're a man and you've been married for any significant length of time, I'm willing to bet you've heard some things that sound similar to this. You've probably at some point heard, "Honey, do you love me? Do you really love me? You don't tell me that you love me. I need to hear that." The reason you're hearing this is because for women feeling loved is a primary issue. One of their primary emotional needs is feeling loved. That's why when they're upset with you about something, you oftentimes hear, "If you really loved me, you would ..." because again that feeling of being loved is fundamental to their psyche and how they relate to the world. So, you need to spend time telling your wife that you love her.

I don't mean just saying the words and meaning it, but showing it to her in your actions. Realize as well that oftentimes what women perceive as love is not always what we think they're going to perceive as love. How do you solve that problem? Ask her. Ask your wife, "What can you do that makes her feel loved, that makes her feel appreciated?" Ask her and then listen to the answer because that's the way to clue into it. Again, women are wired differently and they don't think the same way we do as men. So, that's an important way to understand that.

The other thing to realize is that understanding is very important with them. How often have you heard your wife complain, "You don't listen to me. You don't listen when I talk" or "You don't pay attention to this." That is one of the most common complaints that women have about husbands. "He doesn't listen to me," because that feeling of being understood is a very big deal with women.

Let me just share with you a lesson my mom taught me when I was a teenager on this particular subject. I was probably in my late teenager years when we had this conversation. My mom told me one time, "James, let me tell you something about women. When you grow up and you get married, there's not only going to be a time when your wife comes home from work or another situation and she's frustrated and stressed out. And she's sharing with you a problem she's having. As a man, you're naturally going to think in terms of 'I need to analyze it and suggest a solution. I need to fix it', because that's how you, as a man, are going to think." She continues, "What you need to understand is that as a woman, oftentimes, that is not what she is looking for." She said, "She may completely understand the situation and know what to do about it. She wants you to just listen to her, understand her feelings, and understand what she is going through. That emotional validation is more what she's looking for." My mom said, "Oftentimes, she can actually be annoyed if you're trying to give her a solution." And that is many times how women think.

For those of you who know me, I was married about fourteen years. My wife died about seven years ago of cancer. But when I was married one of the things I learned to do was oftentimes when my wife would be sharing a situation with me and I wasn't totally sure what she was looking for, sometimes I would ask, "Are you looking for advice on this or are you just wanting to share this with me?" Sometimes she would look at me and say, "I just want to share." That was my cue to don't try to fix this. Don't try to offer a solution. Just listen and empathize and connect with her because those things are very important to women. If you've ever been in the position of a marriage counselor, one of the most common complaints you hear is "My husband doesn't listen to me." That's just the difference between men and women.

To dwell with understanding you need to spend time listening to her and connecting with what her needs are. You're dealing with an individual who is wired by God at creation to think and respond and deal with life very differently than men are. The only way as a husband that you're going to successfully do that is to spend time listening to her and understanding how her mind works, how she ticks, and interact with that because women don't think like men do. That's just a fact of life.

Another thing to realize here, is that in 1 Peter 3:7 it talks about "being heirs together of the grace of life." Notice "heirs together." The point I want you to realize with this one is that we are in training for the same job. And that is a very important thing to realize. To emphasize further this point, let's turn over to Galatians 3 and verse 26.

Galatians 3:26. *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

27) *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*
28) *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
29) *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (NKJV)*

Notice what Paul is saying here. He even includes slave versus freemen. Remember in the first century it was common for there to be slaves and slave owners that were coming into the church. The point Paul emphasizes here is that yes, you're in this physical situation but when it comes to salvation and your potential role in the kingdom, these roles don't transfer over. In other words, you're in training for the same job. You have the same value in God's eyes and you're both ultimately going to fulfill the same roles. The same is true for husbands and wives. That's important to realize.

Now understand that concept doesn't mean the structure with the husband being the head of the family has been erased. That's not the case at all. The point I'm trying to get across here is it's important to realize that just because the husband is in a role of leadership in the family does not mean there is an inherent superiority here. The concept I'm trying to get across here is an idea that I'll just word it the way a good friend worded it to me. She put it like this, "It's the idea that superiority in rank means superiority in all areas." In other words, it's the idea that because the husband is placed as the head of the family and in a leadership role that means he is inherently superior to his wife in all areas. Let me just put it very bluntly, that is absolute wrong and absolutely absurd and ridiculous.

That is the same logical equivalent as suggesting the idea that if God has placed a man in the ministry, that means he's superior in all ways to those who are not in the ministry. That is equally absurd and ridiculous. Is there a unique set of responsibilities given to a minister that others who are not in the ministry don't have? Yes. Is there a unique role that husbands play in the family versus the role that wives play? Yes. Does that mean that just because you're in a leadership role that you are inherently superior in all ways? Absolutely not. It just simply doesn't work that way. You have to realize we are equal in God's eyes and we are both in training for the same job with the same potential. Realize that just because someone is placed in a leadership or management-type role doesn't make them in any way inherently superior in other ways to others.

A good manager, whether that's a manager in a work setting or a manager in the family, is aware of the strengths and the talents of those that are on their team and they manage accordingly. They don't try to squash the talents of those on their team for the benefit of their own ego. That is just stupid and counterproductive. Again, if you're a good manager, you realize the strengths that you have on your team and you manage accordingly for the benefit of everybody.

Let me give you a personal example from my own marriage. As I mentioned I was married for about fourteen years. My wife, Linda, when she was living, most of her career she worked in the purchasing industry. Most of her time she worked for a major

steel company and her job was to purchase and manage the supply chain for raw materials that the company would manufacture into guardrail. A lot of the guardrail that you see on the highways throughout the country was made by the company she worked for.

As a result, oftentimes Linda's job was to maintain the relationship with the suppliers and to negotiate the terms of the contracts, getting the best prices and the best deals, etc. As a result, she would in a year's time literally purchase millions of dollars worth of materials for the company. As you can imagine doing this for a living, Linda got quite good at negotiating deals and getting the best terms.

So one of the things I quickly learned in our marriage when we would be making a major purchase, whether that was a mortgage for our home or a car or whatever, when it got down to negotiating the terms of the deal, the smartest thing I could do was shut my mouth. It was quite frankly just shut up, sit back, and let her work the deal because she was better at that than I will ever be in this lifetime. Think about it. It's my bank account too. If I get lower interest rates and better deals, don't we all win? And I realized that. Yes, that's a situation where I could have said, "I'm the husband. I'm the head. I should handle all of this." In that situation, taking that attitude was quite frankly just stupid and counterproductive because here was a lady who was very skilled at this. It was actually amusing to watch. There were a couple of times I would get cracked up watching her spin them into a corner.

In fact, just to give you an example, there was one time when we were working on our mortgage for our home. We were having a conversation with our mortgage broker and it was actually over the phone. So we weren't face to face. The two of us were sitting in front of a speakerphone and he was on the phone on the other side. Linda was working him towards getting a better interest rate for us. She was very patiently walking him into a corner. At various times she would push the subject and he would want to go off on a tangent to distract. She would let him do that for a while and then she would bring him back and she would come at him again. I got amused watching this because I knew what she was doing and she was slowly walking him into a corner. I started to laugh and, then, she reached over and slapped me on the leg as if to say, "Be quiet! You're messing this up." I had to bite my tongue. I had to literally get up and walk out of the room so that I could go laugh and then come back because there was a psychology to what she was doing. Interrupting it was counterproductive.

So what I learned in this case: I could have been the husband and beat my chest and said, "I'm the head. I should handle all this." That was just dumb because Linda was tremendously better at negotiating than I am. If I just let her work her magic, I got better interest rates and better prices. We all win.

That's what a good manager does. You recognize the talents of those that are on your team and play the game accordingly. And in every marriage, it's going to be unique because everyone has their different talents and such, but I can guarantee you whoever you are and whomever you're married to that there will be areas where your wife is,

quite frankly, just smarter and more talented than you in that particular subject. That's just reality. And if you are a man with a brain, you recognize that and you play the game accordingly. You don't try to squash those talents for the benefit of your own ego. That's just stupid and counterproductive.

Keep in mind that we're all in training for the same job. We have the same potential. We have the same value in God's eyes. And you might just wind up working for your wife in the kingdom. That's just a reality. There is nothing in scripture that says because you've been the husband and had the leadership role in this life that means you'll be forever in that role. It's not stated like that. So, we have to realize that we all have the same potential. We have the same value in God's eyes. And, yes, we have been placed in different roles in this physical life and we should act according to those because that's God's will. Keep in mind the big picture in how you do that because the role of the husband is to be the leader, but to be a servant leader. To quote the words of Harold Lee, "If someone gets the short end of the stick, that's supposed to be you because that's the role of what a servant leader does."

Brethren, that's all we have time for today. As I mentioned, this is a multiple part series subject. Next time we'll pick up on the role of women and probably spend about two sermons on that as well before we conclude this subject. Tune in next time for Biblical Gender Roles - Part 5.