



Head & Helper

An Understanding of Biblical Marriage.

Paul Th. Heiligenberg

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Foreword

This is a booklet to help you understand God's plan and purpose for marriage. The last 10 years, my wife, Marjolein, and I have mainly been ministering in Nepal and Northeast India. During our stay and travels in this part of the world, we have seen that the Body of Christ has grown tremendously everywhere, especially among the Nepali, Mizo, Naga and Khasi people. But we also noticed a great lack of teaching in the area of marriage, family, and sex, which is resulting in a lot of problems and misunderstanding in these areas. God has led us to help build and support the Body of Christ through a teaching ministry on Biblical marriage, Christian family, relationships and sexual sin. We thank God that He has been able to use us, and others, to help meet this need.

Throughout the world many people are suffering and are very unhappy in their marriage relationship. It is not our intention with this booklet to solve everyone's marriage problems. Neither do we want to model to you a Western style of marriage. This booklet is more or less a search through the Word of God to find his original meaning and purpose for the marriage relationship. Especially people coming from a Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim or Animist background may have a totally different understanding of marriage. We want to help you discover God's original plan and principles for marriage. Everyone can apply these principles in their own culture in their own way to come to His plan for their own marriage.

May God richly bless you and by the Holy Spirit reveal His plan and purpose for marriage to you as you read and study this booklet.

In Christ Jesus,
Paul Th. Heiligenberg

Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to all those who want to honor God by living their life according to the teaching and principles of the Bible, especially to the Christian couples of Asia. That the Church, the Bride and Body of Christ, may shine as a bright star in the darkness of this world.

Acknowledgements

Although the main idea and outline of this book has been taken from my own teaching which my wife and I have developed over the years, some ideas and examples have been taken from the teachings and writings of other people as well. The part on the 'Blessing of Partnership', Chapter 8 page .. is something we have heard during a seminar by Rod and Ruthi Gilbert at Cornerstone House in Mahabalipuram. We are very thankful for their input in our life, ministry and marriage.

Many friends have helped me by proofreading and giving very helpful advice and suggestions to improve and refine the original document. I am very thankful for their constructive help of this international team.

Thank you, Samson, Corry, Jan, Sjaan, Rev. Cho, Dianne, Cindy, Laurien, Peter and Graeme. May God bless you all.

A special thank you is due to my helper, partner and best friend in my life, my wife, Marjolein, for your constant encouragement and input in this booklet. Without you, half of me would not be there.

Paul

Introduction.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

God's good, pleasing and perfect will! This is what every person starting a marriage relationship hopes and desires. That is what I want for my life and especially for my marriage, something which is not only good but also pleasing (enjoyable), something that is perfect.

Sadly enough many people get very disappointed and hurt in their marriage and it is far from perfect.

If we want to experience God's good, pleasing and perfect will for our lives, we have to follow the two principles Paul points out in these two verses of Romans chapter twelve.

The Apostle Paul is urging us to offer up our bodies as a living sacrifice. He is not telling us to sacrifice our bodies, but to live as though we have been sacrificed. This is very difficult. He is urging us to die to the desires of our flesh. In the nature of our flesh we are very selfish beings; we often expect and use other people to meet our own needs. It is against our nature to sacrifice and to focus on meeting the needs of other people. However only if people feel that we care for them and want to meet their needs are we able to develop a loving relationship and they in their turn will start meeting our needs.

Paul explains that our life can be transformed (become totally different) if we renew our mind. It means that we can change the way we live by changing the way we think. If we want to experience a transformation in our marriage, we have to change the way we think about marriage. That is what this booklet is all about. I want to challenge you to start to think about God's meaning and plan for your marriage. If you live your marriage life according to His will, you will find it will be good, pleasing and perfect. The battle for an exciting and fulfilling marriage is fought in our mind.

I hope this booklet will challenge you and help you to come to the fullness of God's plans and purposes for your marriage.

The Image of God.

'So God created man
in his own image,
in the image of God
he created him;
male and female
he created them.'

Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

The Bible starts with the creation of the earth and of mankind. It introduces us to a God who was from the beginning, a God whom we cannot see, but who speaks to himself in plural form (Genesis 1:26 '*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness*'). This does not mean that there is more than one God. The Bible clearly teaches us that God is One. '*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*' Deuteronomy 6:4 (NIV) But we learn from this that God is plural in his person. If we continue reading the Bible we discover that God is Three in One: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are not three different gods, but three different persons in one God.

If we want to understand marriage, we have to understand God.

God is plural and still One.

In Genesis 1: 27 we read that God created man in his own image.

In many cultures when we ask people, "What does God look like? Does He look like a man or like a woman?" most people will point towards a man. We have the impression that God is a male being, like a husband or a father. In many cultures, the man is almost worshiped as a god and the woman considered as a much lesser being, even as evil.

But if we take a closer look at Genesis 1:27 it does not just tell us that God created man in his image. It says, "In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

We cannot see God with our human eyes, but God created something that is like Him. What is like God?

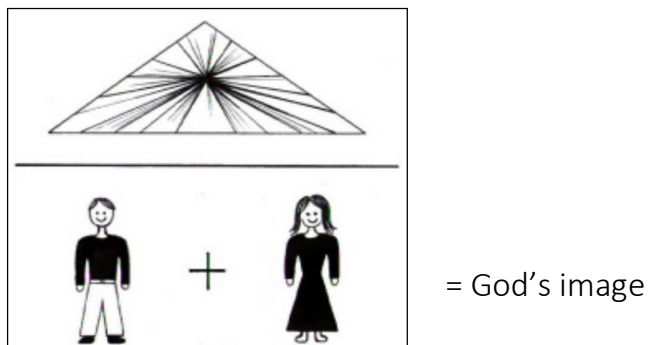
Nature around us? - It shows us proof of the existence and creativity of God.

Jesus? - Jesus is God but we cannot see Jesus now.
Mankind? – Which one, male or female?

If we want to know what God is like, we have to look at his image. His image is male **and** female. So if we look at a husband and a wife together, we are looking at the image of God. By just looking at a man, we cannot fully understand who God is. If we want to understand God, we have to understand that he is both male and female in one. Not physically of course - God does not eat rice, meat and vegetables - He is spirit. But in his nature, in his character, He is both male and female in one. So a woman is just as much the image of God as a man. The Bible does not teach us that a woman is a lesser part of God's image. No! They are both an equal part of the image of God. If we want to understand God, we need to understand the characteristics and nature of both male and female, of both husband and wife.

If we want to symbolize God, we can draw a triangle, symbolizing the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Let us take a look at the following picture:



God (pictured as a triangle) is in heaven, (above the line). We cannot see him now. But He has created something that is like Him (under the line), His image. He created a man and a woman. So we can say that: Husband + Wife = God's image. If we want to understand God, we have to look at both parts of His image. We have to understand both the male and female characteristics.

Does the bible teach us at other places about the female side of God? For *this is what the LORD says: "... As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."* Isaiah 66:12-13 (NIV)

Here we see God is comparing himself with a mother, showing his female side of giving comfort like a mother.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." Matthew 23:37 (NIV)

Here we see God comparing himself to a mother chicken (a hen), giving protection in times of danger.

God has many more characteristics, which we consider more 'female' than 'male', like being merciful and compassionate, showing emotions, having a serving attitude, etc.

As the Bible teaches us to pray to 'Our Father' (Matthew 6:9) we do not address God as 'Mother' but we do have to realize that in His nature, God is both male and female.

Foundation 1:

As we think about marriage, this is our first foundational thought:

Husband and Wife are two equally valuable beings.

They are both reflections of God's character and nature. We should not consider the one more or less valuable than the other.

Questions to think about and to discuss:

- What is your view about the value of a man and the value of a woman?
- On which beliefs have you based your thoughts?
- Do you believe that a woman is as valuable as a man?

The Purpose of Marriage.

‘For this reason
a man will leave
his father and mother
and be united
to his wife,
and they will become one flesh.’

Genesis 2:24 (NIV)

After the account of creation in Genesis chapter one, we find a more detailed version in chapter two. We read in chapter one that God created male and female, but we read in chapter two that he first created Adam. Adam was created in the image of God.

Then we read in Genesis 2:18 *‘The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”’*

God had created Adam in His own image which means Adam had both male and female characteristics. He was a complete being. But God, who is plural himself, saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. He saw that Adam needed a helper. In Chapter 4 of this booklet we will study more on the meaning of a helper. But Adam needed someone equal to him with whom he could have meaningful fellowship. So we read in verse 21 of Genesis 2 that God split Adam into two beings. He put Adam to sleep and took a part (a rib) out of him and made that into a woman. God did not only take a physical part out of Adam, he took the female part out of Adam. Together they (the male and female) were the complete image of God. (Of course every man has still some ‘femaleness’ in him and every woman still some ‘maleness’, but one is dominant in each person.)

Why did God do this? What was his reason behind this? Why did he not just create two Adams? His reason we find in verse 24. Genesis 2:24 says, *‘A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife’*. After separating Adam into two different beings, God gave them back to each other again in marriage so that they could experience unity. Adam had become One in Two, in two separate different bodies, but in marriage the Two could become One again.

God had created them in such a way that they also could become physically one through the sexual union. It says in Genesis 2:24, *‘they will become one flesh’*.

From this we can also learn that sex is not something sinful, but a gift of God through which a husband and a wife can express and enjoy their oneness.

Now Adam and Eve were together and together they enjoyed fellowship with God. Genesis chapter 1 and 2 shows us that we were created to live in fellowship with each other and with God. This shows in the first part of Genesis 3:8, *'Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day...'* Apparently God came to visit, to have fellowship with them every day.

If we go back to Genesis 2:24, it is very important that we notice that it does not say, *'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother so they can multiply themselves through being one flesh.'*

Multiplication is not the reason God instituted marriage. In many cultures, a marriage is only considered successful once there are children, especially once there is a son to secure the inheritance and to carry on the name of the family. Many times a man will seek a divorce or a second wife if the marriage remains childless after some years. It is a great cause of shame and it brings a lot of emotional suffering if there is no offspring.

Of course children are a blessing from God as we can read in Psalm 127: 3-5 but they are not the reason for marriage. Basically, we do not need marriage in order to multiply ourselves. Sadly enough there are many children born out of pre-marital sex and adultery, which causes these children to grow up outside the secure atmosphere of a home with a loving father and mother. God definitely wants each child to be born in a home with a father and a mother. But it was not out of the need for multiplication that God instituted marriage.

God's purpose for instituting marriage was that a man and a woman could live in complete unity together.

Even if a couple do not have any children in their entire life but live in unity, they still have a very successful marriage, enjoying the wholeness of spiritual, emotional, and physical unity. But even if a couple has two sons and two daughters but no spiritual and emotional unity together, then from God's viewpoint that is not a successful marriage, because God's reason for marriage is unity and not multiplication.

UNITY*

Uplift one another
Need one another
Intimately relate to one another
Trust one another
Yield to one another

*(From: Make a life, Not just a living. By: Dr. Ron Jenson)

Uplift one another. - This has to do with how we speak to each other and about each other. Does your speaking lift the other person up or does it break the other person down? Philippians 2:3 says that we in humility should consider (and speak to and about) the other person better than ourselves.

Need one another. - To acknowledge the need of someone means to acknowledge that I am not complete nor perfect in myself. I need the other person to become a better and more complete person.

Intimately relate to one another. - Intimately relating to one another means to share and talk about the things that are inside of us: our thoughts, dreams, hopes, fears, feelings and experiences. It also means we need to take time to listen to what the other person wants to share.

Trust one another. - Without trust, unity is impossible. In marriage we need to be able to trust one another with everything, our finances, the things we have shared and discussed together, our failures and our sexual feelings. If I cannot be sure my partner will not gossip about my failures, I will not share myself with that person and unity will be impossible.

Yield to one another. - To yield to someone has to do with giving that person priority in our life. We can yield to our work or ministry, or to our friends, or to our family, etc. Once we are married, we have to make our partner the highest priority (next to God) and yield to that person.

I hope you understand that unity in marriage has a lot more meaning than just the sexual unity. Unless we have spiritual and emotional unity, the sexual unity will not be very meaningful and can even lead to a lot of resentment.

Sex however is definitely an important part of marriage. There are more and more good Christian books available nowadays that deal with all the details of sexual life. We strongly recommend that you read one of them in the month before you get married and read it again once you are married. Without having a proper understanding of how to have a mutually satisfying sexual relationship, marriage can become a very frustrating and even painful experience. With a good understanding and mutual respect, it is one of the greatest gifts God has given to each married couple.



Foundation 2:

The purpose for marriage is Unity.

Questions to think about and to discuss.

- What is the purpose of marriage in your culture? On which beliefs is this purpose based?
- Is your marriage growing towards unity? Reflecting the image of God?

The Picture of Biblical Marriage.

'The husband is the
head of the wife,
as Christ is the
head of the Church,'

Ephesians 5:23 (NIV)

'I will make a helper
suitable for him.'

Genesis 2:18 (NIV)

If you want to build a big, strong house, the most important thing to do is to lay a deep and solid foundation. If we want to build a strong and fulfilling marriage we have to consider on what kind of foundational belief system we will build our marriage. In the first two chapters, we have looked at the two major foundational beliefs on which we should build our marriage.

1) Man and Woman are both created in the image of God.
They are both equally valuable and important.

2) The purpose of marriage is Unity.

Based on these two beliefs, we are going to take a closer look at God's design for marriage and how we can build a 'house' where we can enjoy living. We need a house which not only has the strength to endure storms but also a house where it is a pleasure to be and spend our time - a home.

Although in value and importance men and women are equal, in many other ways they are different from each other. They are different in body structure, but also in personality and emotional make up. As we study the Bible we, discover that God had different roles in mind for a husband and a wife to play within the marriage relationship. Without understanding these roles, it will be impossible to live in unity together, we would not be able to complete each other and fulfill the purposes God has for our lives.

Let us see what are the specific roles we can find in the Bible:

'For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church,'
Ephesians 5:23 (NIV)

'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her' Ephesians 5:25 (NIV)

From Ephesians 5:23 we can learn that the main role of the husband in marriage is to be "the head of his wife". He can learn how to be a head by looking to the example of Christ as head over the Church. In verse 25, we find out that he is to love his wife, just as Christ loved the church.

The meaning of the word love that is given here is the meaning of the Greek word 'Agape' which means: Giving value or importance to somebody else. This kind of love is selfless unconditional and sacrificial love. How to love is given in the example of how Jesus loved the church and gave himself up for her. The husband's main role model of how to be a godly husband is given in the example of the life of Jesus Christ.

'The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."' Genesis 2:18 (NIV)

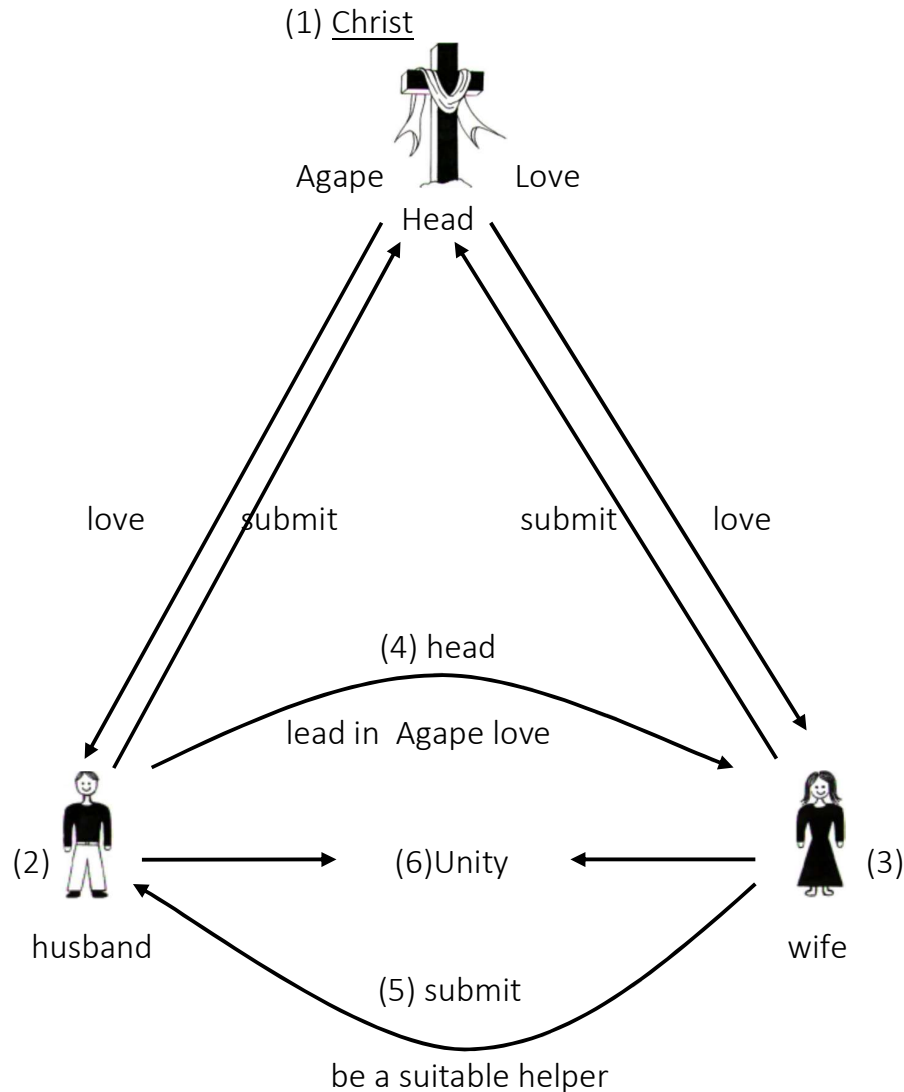
'Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Ephesians 5:22 (NIV)

From Genesis 2:18, we learn that the woman was created to be a suitable helper, so the main role of the wife in marriage is to be "a suitable helper" to her husband. Ephesians 5:22 teaches us that she should submit her life to her husband in the same way she has submitted her life to Christ.

This is an incredible act of trust and can only be a response to love. Once a woman is convinced that a man loves her like Jesus loves her, that he has the best in mind for her life, and that it is God's will for them to get married, then she can make the decision to surrender her life to him in the same way she has surrendered her life to Jesus. Please note that this submission cannot be demanded by force; it is a response to love. But if she does not submit her life to him and keeps on living her own life in her own way, unity will not be possible.

In a later chapter, we will take a closer look at what it means to be a suitable helper. But it is clear that it does not say 'servant'. Imagine a doctor doing a complicated operation and he needs some help and advice. Who will he ask for help? the sweeper? the cook? No. He will ask an equally or even more qualified doctor to help him. In the same way, the wife is created to be an equally (or even more) qualified helper for the husband, so that together they can accomplish the task God has given them in life to do.

Combining all these Bible verses together, we can draw the following picture:



This picture shows two equal partners submitted under the Headship of Christ, forming a unity abiding within the roles God has given for the marriage relationship.

Point. 1) Christ is the head of all people.

Christ is the head of the Church of which he is the Saviour. (Ephesians 5:23) He is the head of every man, woman and child in the Body of Christ. He saved us through the sacrifice of his life. He poured out his love on us.

Point. 2) A man should submit his life to Christ.

This is the beginning of a Christian marriage. Romans 12:1,2 -A man, responding to the love of Christ, dying to his own rights and desires, sacrificing his life to God. -Going through the process of having his mind renewed and starting to think the way God thinks. -Transforming his life, not living as the rest

of his community does, but becoming a new creation in Christ. -He will taste that God's will for his life is good, pleasing and perfect.

Point. 3) A Woman should submit her life to Christ.

Before we enter into the unity of marriage, a woman should have committed her life to Christ. Responding to the love of Christ, she should make herself a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1,2), dying to her own rights and desires. How can she submit to her husband as to the Lord, if she is not submitted to the Lord? This, her relationship with Christ, is the most important relationship in her life. Out of this relationship she finds the strength and courage to submit her life to the husband God has for her.

Point. 4) After marriage the husband becomes the head of his wife also; he should lead her in agape love just like Jesus. (Ephesians 5:23,25)

We worship and love Jesus, because he died for us, He showed His love to us by sacrificing His life. That's why we have decided to follow him that's why we worship Him and seek His will for our life. In the same way the husband is to show love to his wife, seeking to do what is best for her. Being the head is being like Jesus.

No. 5) After marriage the wife becomes the helper of her husband, she should submit her life to him. (Genesis 2:18, Ephesians 5:22)

As a response to the love shown to her by her husband and out of obedience to Christ, a wife submits herself to her husband and accepts his leadership in her life. Trusting that he will do his uttermost best to bring her to her full potential in life. She makes it her highest priority not to seek her own fulfillment, but to do all she can to fulfill and complete her husband.

Point. 6) Together they will be in unity. (Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31)

If both of them live according to the roles God has given for the marriage relationship, they will both be seeking the best for each other. This will quickly lead them into a deep friendship and appreciation for each other, which will develop into spiritual, emotional and physical unity.

Questions to think through and to discuss:

- What are the main roles husband and wife play in your cultural/ family tradition?
- Are these roles leading you towards unity and mutual fulfillment?

The Head

‘For the husband is the
head of the wife,
as Christ is the
head of the Church,
his body,
of which he is the Saviour’
Ephesians 5:23 (NIV)

What does it mean for a man to be the ‘head’ of his wife and children? In many cultures this is practiced as the man is the head and the woman is the tail. Or the man is the boss and the woman is the servant. The man does the thinking and commanding and the woman does the work. The man is the head so he should be in control. Whatever the husband says, the wife should obey.

If we take a second look at Ephesians 5:23 it does not say, “The man is the head of his wife.” (period) If it said that, we could give it any meaning we want. But the Apostle Paul has already given us his interpretation of headship. He wrote, ‘The man is the head of his wife, as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.’ In Ephesians 5:25 he again emphasizes this model saying, ‘Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.’ So the Bible is asking every husband to follow the example of headship practiced by Jesus Christ.

This does not mean that the husband has no authority over his wife and children. In Matthew 28:18 (NIV) Jesus said, “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” So as the husband is the example of Christ in his family, he also carries the authority. But we have to ask ourselves, why was all authority on heaven and on earth given to Jesus? Because, as we read in the book of Philippians chapter 2, he had been obedient to the Father - even unto death on the cross.

‘Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him

to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,'
Philippians 2:5-9 (NIV)

Headship means basically two things:

Responsibility + Authority

A king or president who only practices his authority to do things in his own interest is called a dictator and his people will hate him very much. However, a king or president who fulfills his responsibilities serving the wellbeing of his people, will be loved, respected and obeyed.

Just as Jesus came to serve us and to redeem us, a husband is called to serve and redeem his wife and children, to bring them to their full potential in life.

What are the responsibilities of the husband?

Basically he is responsible for:

- the spiritual needs
 - the emotional needs
 - the material/ physical needs
- of his wife and children.

We will study each of these three areas in three different chapters.

Question to think through and to discuss:

-In your opinion what is the meaning of the man being the head?

Spiritual Headship

‘Therefore he is able
to save completely
those who come to God
through him,
because he always lives
to intercede for them.’

Hebrews 7:25 (NIV)

What does it mean to be the spiritual leader of the family? It is like being the pastor of a church, or like being like the high priest in the Old Testament.

Every man and every woman is a priest in the Kingdom of God.

1 Peter 2:9 tells us that we are a chosen people and a royal priesthood. And Galatians 3:28 tells us that there is neither male nor female for we are all one in Christ. So in the Kingdom of God every woman is also a priest. But as the head over the family, the husband has also been given a special spiritual responsibility as a priest over his family, just as Jesus is the high priest over the church. (Hebrews 5:7-10)

What are the husband’s priestly responsibilities?

First of all we have to ask ourselves the question, ‘What is Jesus as the head and high priest of the church doing right now?’

We find the answer in Hebrews chapter 7: 25 ‘.., *he always lives to intercede for them.*’ Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father lives to intercede for us!!! That is his main function, his main responsibility right now. So what does that tell us about a husband’s responsibility?

As a priest in the family a husband has the following responsibilities.

1) To Intercede (Hebrews 7:25)

As an intercessor, the husband seeks God’s blessing over his wife (and children). Praying that God’s name will be glorified in their lives, that His kingdom will come and His will be done.

Sometimes I am very busy with my work as a teacher, writer, and leader, working hard to serve God and my family. But then all of a sudden everything goes wrong. My wife is frustrated or angry, my work is amounting to nothing, and

my son is naughty and whiny all the time. I begin wonder why? I work so hard for them and it is not appreciated. Soon I realize that I have forgotten to intercede for them. I have not taken the time to pray and seek God's face and favor over my family. I have to confess that I have forsaken my first and biggest responsibility to my family.

As an intercessor, the husband is representing his family to God.

He should take time daily to seek God and to intercede for his wife and children -and to listen to what God has to say to him about leading his family.

One time in the middle of my morning prayer-time, God said to me, "Now Paul go and make breakfast and bless your wife." In our times of prayer God wants to help us to lead our family, he will tell us what to do to help our wife and children.

So in order for a man to be a godly husband, he first of all needs to develop a good and disciplined prayer life.

2) To Teach

'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,' Ephesians 5:25-26 (NIV)

How can a husband purify and cleanse his wife? How can he make her more beautiful? Through the Word of God.

Now imagine a husband walking after his wife with an open Bible, telling her not to gossip, to submit to him, not to steal, etc. Do you think this will work? Probably not! She will most likely despise him. This is neither the way to teach our wife, nor our children.

A husband should not teach like a Pharisee nor as a teacher of the law but he should teach as Jesus did. How did Jesus teach? He showed us the meaning of love by dying on the cross. He showed the meaning of forgiveness by accepting sinners. He showed the meaning of patience by continuing to teach his disciples even after they denied him. He showed the meaning of holiness; He did not sin.

A husband is to teach by example, showing by his life the nature and character of God to his wife and children and modeling the meaning of forgiveness, grace, love, patience, holiness, and faithfulness.

As a teacher, the husband is representing God to his family.

After modeling it himself, he can exhort and show his family from the scripture

that this is the way God wants us to live.

The Apostle Paul was a good teacher. He could confidently say:

'Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be pleased with you.' Philippians 4:9 (NIV)

In the same way every husband and father should be able to say to his wife and children, "Put into practice what you have seen in my life and have learned from me and God will be happy with you."

As a teacher, we set the example for godly living.

If a husband wants to be teaching and modeling the Word of God and the character and nature of God to his family, it is of crucial importance that he knows and understands the Word of God. Take time daily to study and meditate on the Word of God and make sure you put it into practice first.

3) To Bless

'The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:" "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them." Numbers 6:22-27 (NIV)

It was part of the responsibility of the priest to bless the people so that God would bless them.

Every husband is called to bless his wife and children.

Blessings are not only prayers. Blessing has to do with all that we say to one another.

To Bless means: 'To lift up, or to give value and importance.'

To Curse means: 'To put down, to devalue or give no importance.'

So if I tell my wife, "Thank you for cooking a delicious dinner." I have pronounced a blessing over her. Or if I say, "That was very good advice you gave me." I have blessed her. But if I am not even willing to listen to her advice, I have cursed her, I have not given her value.

If my son comes home from school with a bad mark for his test and I tell him, "You worthless fellow you are good for nothing." I have cursed him. But if he comes home from school with a bad mark for his test, or he has failed his exam, and I tell him: "Son you failed your exam, but God has a great plan for your life.

Do not give up. Next time you will succeed and even if you never pass your exam, I will never stop loving you." This will bless him tremendously and, remembering Numbers 6:27, (*"So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."*) I know it will enable God to bless him.

Every day when I am at home, we pray together as a family, I put my hand on my wife's head and I speak a blessing over her. Then I put my hand on my son's head and then on my daughter's head and I bless them. There is tremendous power in physical touch and pronouncing a blessing. It paves the way for God to put His Name on them and to bless them also because the spiritual head of the family is asking Him to do so.

Speaking negative things to your wife and children is cursing them. The sad thing is, it hinders them from receiving the blessings God wants to give them. They will start believing the negative things you say to them and become exactly the way you are cursing them to be.

Throughout the day, speak blessings to them. Touch them in a friendly non-sexual way. Speak good and positive things about their gifting, abilities and future. This will enable them to believe it and act on it.

Questions to think through for boys and husbands:

- How are you developing in your spiritual leadership at home? How is your prayer life, your behavior and your speaking?
- Is your life an example and a blessing or a curse to others?

Emotional Headship

**'... but only one thing
is needed.
Mary has chosen
what is better,
and it will not
be taken away from her.'"**

Luke 10:41-42 (NIV)

As human beings, we have a physical body. So eating food and drinking water is essential to survive. We are also spiritual beings; our spiritual life is the foundation on which we base our values and actions. Without our relationship with God we would be lost in the dark, living a meaningless life.

But we are mainly emotional beings. Through our soul, our emotional life, we relate to other humans and we relate to ourselves. Even if I had all the food in the world to eat, but nobody to talk to, I would be incredibly lonely and hating my life. Even God said about Adam, it is not good for a man (a human being) to be alone. The greatest reason why God created us, is probably because God himself was longing to express himself to someone else, to communicate, to love and to be loved.

God has created us as emotional beings living in a physical body. This means we need food to eat, but much more than that we need our emotional needs to be met in order to live a meaningful life.

What are our emotional needs?

Our biggest emotional need is:

to feel loved!

From the moment we are born we are crying out to be loved. If a child does not feel that his/ her father and mother love him, he will try to meet that need in any way possible. He will try to meet friendship at any cost (often very unhealthy ones) or he will start to act very negatively to get attention.

Also, as adults, we constantly need our love tank to be filled up. If we are not feeling loved by our partner, we will start to look elsewhere to meet that need.

Other emotional needs we have are:

to feel accepted,
to feel wanted,
to feel secure,
to feel needed,
to feel valuable,
to have friends,
to experience joy and fun, etc.

As the head of the family the husband is responsible to see that those needs are met in his wife and children.

How can a husband make his wife feel loved, wanted, secure, needed and valuable?

Imagine a man getting up at 5.30 in the morning, spending his first 1.5 hours in prayer and bible study. Then he has tea and a snack at 7 AM reads the newspaper and prepares his office work till 9.00 AM, eats his food and goes off to work (He has a good job and earns Rs 8500,- every month). He comes home at 6 PM and takes a bath. Then he goes off to see his friends or some church activity, comes home at 9 PM to have his dinner, says to his wife she is a great cook, watches TV for an hour and goes off to sleep.

What do you think? Will his wife feel a loved, wanted and valuable woman?

Probably not. Even though she is happy with a good income, she will be living a very unhappy and unsatisfying life. If she does not have a loving relationship with Christ, she might even start another relationship. There is a very reasonable chance that his children will grow up to be rebellious or even drug addicts and develop immoral relationships, trying to feel accepted and loved.

Why? Their emotional needs are not being met.

What can a husband do to meet the emotional needs of his wife and children?

Let's take a look at a story from the Bible.

'As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to

help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)

I think sadly enough that God will have to say to many husbands nowadays:
"Mister, mister, you work so hard and worry about so many things, but you fail in the thing that is needed most; to listen, talk and play with you wife and children. If you do that, they will seek your company instead of running away from you."

The first and best thing a husband can do to meet the emotional needs of his wife and children is:

To spend time with them to listen to them and talk with them.

Especially when a man is caught up in the demands of his job, it takes a lot of discipline to take the time to concentrate on listening to what his wife has to say. She wants to share and talk about the things she has experienced that day, and then she also wants to hear all about her husband's day.

Often when my wife is sharing her experiences of the day with me, after half a minute, my mind goes back to my work and I am working out a plan for the next week. If she asks me after 3 minutes of sharing: "And?.. What do you think about that?" I (embarrassingly) have to say: "Huh? What did you say?" She will look angry at me and say: "Ahh! You were not even listening to me." And she will feel, 'My husband does not care about me, he is not interested in what I have experienced, he does not love me.'

Learning the art of listening is very, very difficult, but very, very essential if we want to develop a lasting and satisfying emotional relationship with our wife and children.

Even to talk is very hard for many men.
If my wife asks me: "How was your day?" I most likely answer: "Good" and continue reading the newspaper or doing whatever I am doing. "Anything special happened today?" she asks. "No." "Is dinner ready?" I ask.

Most men do not like to talk to their wife about their experiences of the day. But if one of their friends or colleagues calls, they can talk for hours about their day. The wife feels: 'My husband does not love me, he is not including me in his life.' Probably the man thinks: 'Why don't you just cook the food.'

Unfortunately if this is the situation his wife will think: 'If I am only good

enough to cook the food, he can forget about it.'

Husbands you must take time to listen, talk and play. Spend meaningful time together. Aim for at least half an hour a day. It will make your wife and children feel that you love them and care for them. It will also make your children want to listen to you and obey you.

Although it should not be our motivation to bless ourselves, if your wife feels loved by you, she will want to make you feel loved also and want to bless you.

It truly is like the Bible says:

'He who loves his wife loves himself' Ephesians 5:28 (NIV)

Another major part of our emotional needs is that we need to feel needed and valuable. God has created each individual with a purpose in life. He has given each man and woman unique qualities and gifting. Some are very gifted in music, others in science, or in mechanics, in writing, in using colors, etc. Every person is different. Unless we can use those gifts in a meaningful way we will not really feel fulfilled in life.

In order to live a fulfilling life, we have to understand and live according to God's plan and purpose for our lives. It is very important that we find out God's plan and purpose for our lives, before we get married. Marriage and children require a lot of energy and time from both husband and wife. Often people find out only after they have married someone that their 'calling' in life does not match their spouse's calling. They cannot use the talents God has given them and they feel very frustrated and unfulfilled.

Many men find fulfillment in their work as they can use their talents there. They overcome challenges and are appreciated by their colleagues. Most women are not fulfilled in cooking and cleaning the whole day.

As a husband I need to help my wife to see her gifting and to understand God's plan for her life. I need to encourage her to use her gifting in the family but also in the society or church. She will then feel that she is needed, that she has something meaningful to contribute. This will make her feel valuable. This means that as a husband I need to sacrifice time, and look after the children or cook, so my wife has time to teach a bible study somewhere, or go for the choir practice, or go to a family to give them counsel. I also will have to sacrifice money so she can complete a computer training course, or buy a guitar. Without me investing time and money she will not be able to develop her life.

Another major way of making people feel valuable and needed is

the way we speak to them and what we give to them. Proverbs 31:28, 31 shows us two very important principles in meeting someone's emotional needs.

*'Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her'
'Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate' (NIV)*

Giving praise and giving material rewards (gifts and presents) are two very powerful communicators to make someone feel that we love them and appreciate what they do for us.

Most husbands receive a salary for their hard work at the end of the week or month. But what does a wife receive at the end of the week or month? Many receive nothing, though they have been working hard, cooking, cleaning, washing, etc. It is only fair that a husband after receiving his salary, sits down with his wife and says, "Look this is what we earned this month, how shall we spend it?" It will make her feel that her work is just as valuable as his work.

Questions to think through and to discuss for the husbands and fathers:

- How much time a day do you spend talking with your wife?
- Do you find the time to talk and play with your children?
- Have your wife and children heard from your mouth that you appreciate them?

Material Headship

**'Finish your outdoor work
and get your fields ready;
after that,
build your house.'**

Proverb 24:27 (NIV)

Imagine an army commander on duty. He is in charge (the head) of his unit. They are stationed somewhere in a remote place along the border, facing an enemy that might attack any moment. They have all their tanks and ammunition ready. Each of the soldiers is well trained and ready to fulfill their given task. Ready to sacrifice his life for his nation. But ... the commander forgot to arrange for the food and water. How long will they last? Will they be able to hold out against their enemy? After their defeat and failure, who will be blamed? The soldiers? No! The commander will have to carry all the blame. He is the one in charge and he is the one who is responsible for his unit.

It is the same way with marriage. Although marriage is not about getting food to eat, without food to eat, we will not last very long.

What are the basic material needs a husband is responsible to provide?

- Food
- Housing
- Clothing

and once God blesses us with children

- Education and/or prepare them to earn a living
- Helping them get married

The book of Proverbs gives us a lot of wise things to consider for a successful life. Let's take a look at the following proverb:

'Finish your outdoor work and get your fields ready; after that, build your house.' Proverb 24:27 (NIV)

What does it mean to get your outdoor work and your fields ready before you build your house?

From our outdoor work (in the office or the business or company) and/ or from our fields we get our income. In our house we have our family life.

So the Bible is telling us that we should first create a source of income before we start our family.

Before a man considers marriage he should sit down and think, 'How am I going to feed, house and clothe my wife? How am I going to feed, clothe and educate my children?'

How can a man equip himself to generate a good income?

First of all, he should finish his schooling to the highest level possible for him. The better we qualify ourselves for a job in society, the more likely we will find a good job. And if we work on the family farm, through education we can learn how to make the farm more productive.

Once a man is married, his responsibilities for the family make it almost impossible to continue full time study. Finish before you get married.

Secondly, he should learn as many skills as possible. Take a course in computers. Get your drivers' license. Learn proper Hindi and English. Or if you are technical, take a course in welding or electricity. The more skills a man has, the easier it will be for him to find a job or get a promotion.

Thirdly, never stop educating yourself. Once we stop educating ourselves, after a year or a few years, younger and more qualified people will take our job or get the promotion for which we were hoping. Always keep yourself well qualified in the area which you are working or ministering in.

This also counts for people who are in full time ministry. Nobody is going to call someone who knows nothing to come and minister to them. Also as ministers (myself included) we need to keep on educating ourselves to meet the needs in our field of ministry the best way we can.

Though God is our Provider, it does not mean that we should sit back and do nothing. *'If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.'* 1 Timothy 5:8 (NIV)

Even as a minister, I cannot say to my wife, "God is sending me on a teaching tour. I will be gone for 6 weeks, I hope you find enough to eat." No, this makes me worse than an unbeliever. As a husband I am responsible to provide for my wife and children.

This same verse tells us we are responsible to provide for our immediate family as well. This certainly includes our parents. When they are old and unable to provide for themselves, the children (especially the sons) carry this

responsibility together.

This also means I should be wise in family planning. If I have only Rs 2500 income, how can I provide for a wife and five children? That is impossible. My children will be hungry and I will not be able to send them to school. I should take proper care in family planning so that I will not have more children than I can look after. Children have a right to proper food, housing, clothing and education. Also they need a lot of emotional attention from their own father and mother.

I do not believe it is sinful to use responsible family planning methods. Such as using a condom, using the pill or even having an operation. But we have to be aware that there are sinful ways of family planning. Once a woman is pregnant we cannot take some medicine so the baby will die. Neither can we take away the baby through an abortion. This would be killing a human life of which God is the creator and giver of life.

I do believe, however, it is wrong to have one child after the other and not be able to emotionally and physically look after them. That is very irresponsible headship.

Questions to think through:

- If you are not married yet, is it possible for you to continue and finish your education?
- What are some skills you would like to learn? Ask people to help you make it possible.
- If you are married, what are you doing about family planning? If you do not know what to do, ask a doctor.

8

The Helper

The LORD God said,
"It is not good
for the man to be alone.
I will make a helper
suitable for him."
Genesis 2:18 (NIV)

The role of the wife is probably one of the most misunderstood roles in human history. Even in many Christian cultures nowadays her role is seen as the role of a servant, less than the role of the husband as the head. If we take a closer look at Genesis, chapter 1 and 2, we can see that that is not what God meant when he created her. We have already seen that God created her as an equal part of his image. In other words, she is just as godly as a man is. God created her because he saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. God then separated Adam in two different beings, so that they could relate to each other and fulfill the emotional and physical needs that came with being human. God's purpose was that they would be a unity, not two different parties competing against each other. It was His plan that they would function as one. Just like God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and the God the Spirit (The Holy Spirit) function as One. They are not competing with each other. Neither is one of them lesser or more than the other. They are One.

When God finished his creation, he gave the command that we should rule over the earth and subdue it. To whom was this command given? to the male or the female? who is supposed to rule over the earth?

'God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."'
Genesis 1:28 (NIV)

After creating them male and female (Genesis 1:27) the Bible says that God blessed them (both male and female) and commanded them (both the husband and the wife) to rule over the earth and to subdue it.

We can see that God addressed them as one. It does not say, 'God blessed them and said to Adam, "Rule over the earth, and you, Eve, serve your husband

and meet his needs.” No. The commandment to rule was given to both of them together. This was the blessing. Husband and wife would live together as two equal partners. That is why this blessing has also been called the Blessing of Partnership.

But they were not two equal males; they were a male and a female. Two very different beings created to each play a different role in this unity, so they could fulfill the commandment to rule over and subdue the earth.

If we look back to Genesis 1:28, we notice that part of the blessing and commandment was ‘to be fruitful and increase in number.’ It was very much in God’s mind that human beings should be multiplied within families having a father and mother who can model the image (the character and nature) of God to them. But also this part of the commandment was given to both of them. As we have already studied in the part on ‘emotional headship’ in chapter 4, a father is just as much responsible for raising his children as the mother.

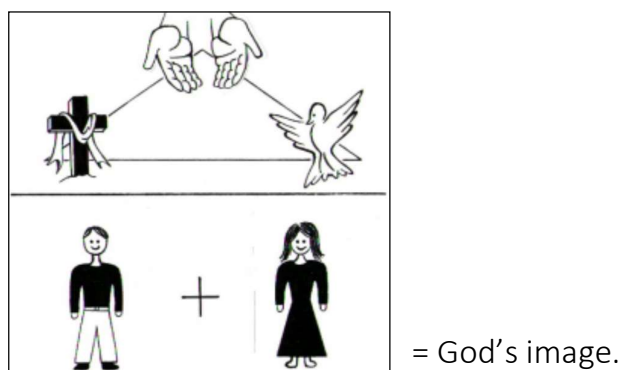
God blessed Adam and Eve as two equal partners to raise a family together and to rule over the earth together. Why, in most cultures nowadays, is the husband seen as far more superior to the wife and often seen as the boss of the family instead of the head? And why is the wife treated as the servant of the husband instead of his helper (partner)?

This distortion of the divine role model happened very quickly after creation was completed. We read in Genesis chapter 3 how sin came into the world. After the snake tempted Eve to sin, Adam failed to exercise his spiritual headship and allowed Eve to sin without warning her. Instead of warning and rebuking his wife, he listened to her, followed her and sinned also. Now mankind had become disobedient to their Creator and became separated from God. When God came to look for them, they were hiding from Him. When God asked Adam what he had done, he blamed his wife who blamed the snake. Then God cursed the snake, but also the man and the woman also came under God’s punishment. We read in Genesis 3: 16 that God said to the woman, *‘Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you’*

For a husband to rule over his wife was never God’s plan but came as a result of sin. It still is this way in many cultures where the men are dominating the women. As a result of this, the whole of mankind is suffering because the man has lost his partner, his helper. It is not possible to experience unity between a boss and a servant. Someone who is dominated will not be able to fulfill the one she is being dominated by. Neither will her needs be met and as she is suffering emotionally, she will fight back and will try to manipulate her husband instead of trying to help him. As a result, both husband and wife are suffering and the children grow up with a very distorted image of who God is.

Praise God, Jesus Christ has paid the price for our sins. He has set us free from the curse of the law of sin and death. Now we are free! Free to live according to God's plan for creation. Free to go back to the original plan of partnership between husband and wife, a partnership where a man and a woman together reflect the full image of God and where the man functions as the head and the woman as the helper.

We have already seen that as the head of the partnership, the husband is very much a picture of Jesus Christ. If we look again to our picture about the image of God, we pictured God as a triangle resembling the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



The husband as the head is a picture of Jesus. Who is the wife as the helper a picture of? Who should she look to as her example of how to fulfill her role within the marriage relationship?

The biggest example of a helper is the Holy Spirit! Do we realize that before Jesus started his ministry, the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and remained in him?

'Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him."' John 1:32 (NIV)

The Holy Spirit came to help Jesus, He came to enable him to do the will of the Father. Together they were functioning as a unity fulfilling God's will.

Although the Bible does not teach us that the wife is a picture of the Holy Spirit, she is part of God's image and Gen.2 says that Eve was created to be a helper to Adam. Let us see the wife as a helper as an example of the Holy Spirit, instead of that of a servant, a cook, and a sweeper.

In order to understand her role as a helper, we need to look at the functions of the Holy Spirit. What does He do to help? What are His tasks, His functions and actions?

He counsels	He convicts
He encourages	He teaches
He comforts	He brings joy
He gives insight	He has words of wisdom
He gives gifts of healing	He intercedes for us
He gives fellowship	etc.

'In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.' Romans 8:26 (NIV)

We need help in the areas where we are weak. As it says here 'the Spirit helps us in our weakness.' That is why we see God often bringing two people together who are different from each other in their gifts and abilities. This is not so they can fight the whole day over their differences but so they can help and complete each other. He binds them together, so that, together with their gifts and qualities combined, they can raise a family and fulfill the plans and purposes of God for their lives.

God has called my wife and I as a couple to minister to the church in the area of marriage and family life. As a teacher and a writer, I am very systematic and structured in my mind. I am weak in social contacts and interacting with people. God has given me a wife who is much stronger in social contacts and makes a lot of fun with people. Together we make a very good team. She has not developed the gift of teaching much, but she gives me advice on what to say and input on what to write and how to communicate things better to people.

I am partially colorblind where as my wife is very good with colors. But if I want to benefit from that, I need to allow her to advise me what clothes to wear together and what not.

Some of our friends are very different. In one marriage, the wife is a very good teacher and administrator. They both have a calling to reach the unreached people groups. In their ministry to unreached peoples, she does a lot of the training and leadership in the organization they work with. Her husband does a lot more work at home and does a lot more of the practical work in the

organization and to make their ministry function. But together they serve one goal in their lives - to reach the unreached. Within the family the husband is very much the head of his wife and children.

Questions to think through for girls and women:

- Which qualities of the Holy Spirit do you see in your own life?
- Are you using them to partner with your husband?

Questions for the men:

- What do you believe is the meaning of a wife being a helper to the husband?

Spiritual Helper

'... the Spirit helps us
in our weakness.
.. the Spirit himself
intercedes for us ...'
Rom 8:26 (NIV)

Romans 8:26 says, *'The Spirit intercedes for us'*
Interceding for her husband is the best way a wife can help him in his role as husband and father and in his work. No husband is perfect. We need prayer. When a woman is frustrated or angry with her husband, instead of criticizing him, making him insecure and defensive, it is much better to intercede for him and ask God to open his eyes so he can see his shortcomings.

I am often gone for teaching while my wife stays at home because of the children. Still she is a major source of help to me, because she intercedes for me while I am teaching.

'But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.'
John 14:26 (NIV)

The wife also is called to be a teacher of the character and nature of God. *'My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching.'* Proverbs 6:20 (NIV) As a mother, a woman has great influence over her children. Due to the husband's responsibility to provide, he is gone out of the house for a great part of the day. His helper takes over his responsibility to teach, to model the character and nature of God to their children and to lead them in his ways.

Should the helper teach the head? This is a harder question. Many men see it as a weakness to ask their wife for help. They think that a boss should never ask a servant: 'Will you please help me? I do not understand this.' Once he realizes that she is created to help him, that they are two equal partners, not boss and servant, he will not see it as a weakness to tap into the resources God has made available to him and ask for advice.

If it comes to a conflict or misunderstanding and the wife believes that the husband is in error and he is not willing to listen to reason, the Bible teaches us

that the wife should follow Sarah's example and win her husband over without words but by her behavior.

'Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,' 1 Peter 3:1 (NIV)

In the same chapter of 1 Peter 1, Peter says that a believing husband should respect his wife as a partner. If he does not, God will even stop listening to his prayers.

'Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.'

1 Peter 3:7 (NIV)

Hopefully a believing husband will understand that God has given him his wife to help him in all areas of his life. He should be open to listen to his wife, respect her opinions and discuss things together. Most men think very rationally, while most women make much more use of their feelings and intuition (prophetic giftings) to come to a decision. It takes an effort for a man to try to understand his wife's reasoning and feelings.

It is clear that the apostle Paul was expecting a believing husband and wife to come to a mutual understanding and agreement through mutual respect, not by demanding slave like obedience.

If he is not willing to listen, however, she should win him over through her behaviour, and through prayer and intercession, not through non-stop arguments.

'But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.'
John 14:26 (NIV)

A woman is created to be a counselor to her husband. Most women are much more sensitive to the gifts of the Holy Spirit than most men. It is part of their nature. So with words of knowledge, prophecy, and their gifts of discernment, they are the best counselor a man can wish for.

'To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits' 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (NIV)

Of course every man needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit himself. In her natural abilities, however, the woman is much more like the Holy Spirit than a man is. She has been created to help, to enable, and to give counsel through her abilities to discern and understand through intuition.

A man might feel very frustrated when his wife gives him counsel different from his own insight he may say, “Why don’t you mind your own business.” But then he is forgetting, his business = her business. They are one! They should be pursuing one goal together, not living in two separate worlds both minding their own business.

Take for example if a man has a conflict with his boss at the company he works for he might voice his anger to his wife at home. She will listen to him but in due time his wife might help him see the reason behind the conflict and that he might be able to change the situation by changing his own behaviour. It might be very hard for him to accept that advice but he should not see it as an attack on himself. She is a part of him. He should realize that he needs her to solve this conflict.

Question:

For husbands:

-Do you allow your wife to be a partner? Do you turn to her for advice?

For wives:

-How are you doing as a Spiritual Helper? Do you intercede for your husband?

-Do you have the patience to teach through your behavior, instead of your words?

Emotional Helper

‘May the grace of
the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of
the Holy Spirit
be with you all.’

2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV)

‘May ... the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.’ 2 Corinthians 13:14
(NIV)

We have already discovered that the woman was created because God saw that it was not good for the man to be alone.

The greatest reason the woman was created is to give fellowship. So that man and woman could be in fellowship together.

It is so sad that many women nowadays spend their whole lives chasing after their own career, neglecting the emotional needs of their husband and children. Of course it is understandable that a woman will seek her own fulfillment and independence if she is suffering under a dominating husband who is not considerate about her needs. But a lonely husband and lonely children will turn to other places to fill their loneliness, starting other often unhealthy relationships, maybe drinking, or reading pornography, etc. This does not mean that a woman should be at home the whole day and can not have a job. **But it should be a priority in her life to meet the emotional needs of her husband and children.**

God wants husband and wife to be each other’s best friend. A wife should save some of her time and energy to give intimate fellowship to her husband. This includes sexual fellowship. Take time to be together.

As the head of the family, a man may feel very insecure. He needs a lot of encouragement. ‘*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*’ 1Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV) Words of encouragement are very powerful to help a husband feel good about himself. This will result in good behavior towards his wife and children.

‘*An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.*’
Proverbs 12:25 (NIV)

With her words, a woman has the power to bring down her husband. If she always makes him feel that he is not good enough, he might one day give up and go to someone who says something nice to him.

Most women encourage their husbands to do what she thinks he should be doing. That is not encouragement but manipulation. Encouragement is finding out the desires of someone else and encouraging him (or her) to come to their full potential. It is encouraging him in what he is doing, tell him he is doing a good job and that you are proud of him.

Also children are very much in need of her words of encouragement, especially in their schoolwork and developing healthy friendships and also in developing their personality.

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,' Galatians 5:22 (NIV)

There is a saying, "A man builds a house, a woman makes a home."

A wife has a strong ability to create atmosphere, either for good or for bad. Let your house be filled with joy, love, and peace instead of with anger, strife, and criticism. Create an atmosphere where your husband and children will love to be with you.

Besides the emotional atmosphere, the natural atmosphere is also very important. Use your creativity to decorate your house, making it into a home.

Another saying says, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach." Good food is very important in creating a good atmosphere. To pave the way to your husband's heart, develop your cooking skills and cook nice (and healthy) food.

Questions to think through:

- Is there anything you can do to make the atmosphere in your house more positive?
- Do you take time to fellowship with your husband?
- Are your words building up or wearing down?

11
Material Helper

**'She brings him good,
not harm,
all the days of her life.'**

Proverbs 31:12 (NIV)

Although the husband is responsible to provide for his family, his wife can put her gifts and talents to work to in many ways to meet the needs that are there. However, especially if they have children (under 16) she should realize that meeting their emotional and spiritual needs is much more important than making more money. Also ministering to her husband's emotional needs should have priority in her life. That still gives her a lot of time to be useful in society and, if necessary to help meet the needs of the family.

Let us take a close look at one of the most ideal woman in the Bible and look for her qualities as a helper. Of course, no woman will exactly be like her but every woman can learn a lot from her.

Proverbs 31:10-31 (NIV)

v.10 *A wife of noble character. She is worth far more than rubies.*

(She is very valuable.)

v.11 *Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.*

(She is trustworthy.)

v.13 *She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.*

(She finds useful and income generating work to do.)

v.14 *She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.*

(She is wise in where she does her shopping, making an effort to gather a variety of good food.)

v.15 *She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.*

(She works hard from early morning to take care of the family and others.)

v.16 *She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.*

(She is a good steward and has a wise business mind and is involved in business.)

v.17 *She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.*

(She is not acting like a beauty queen - just sitting around looking beautiful.)

v.18 *She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.*

(She makes the most of her time and of her business.)

:20*She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.*

(She is compassionate and merciful.)

v.21 *When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.*

(She thinks ahead and plans in advance.)

v.22 *She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.*

(She is creative.)

v.23 *Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.*

(She was wise in which marriage partner to agree to.)

v.26 *She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.*

(She is not a gossip, nor a busybody, nor a foolish talker.)

v.28 *Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:*

(She has good relationships with her husband and children.)

v.30 *Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*

(She fears God above everything.)

So there are many ways a woman can help her husband, even by running her own business.

But also by:

- Making and selling pickles or other food items
- Growing and selling vegetables
- Opening a teashop or a bookshop, etc.
- Doing part time work in an office
- Even doing a full time job

But at all times she should keep her ministry to the spiritual and emotional needs of her husband and children on the first and highest place in her life, after developing and maintaining her relationship with God.

We have seen that a wife is an incredibly valuable and helpful helper to her husband. Actually we should not see her as a helper to her husband, with the understanding that the husband is number one and she is helping him. They are two parts of a unity. One functions as the head, the other as the helper. The man as the head, finds his example in Jesus Christ. The woman, as the helper,

finds her example in the Holy Spirit. The Bible does not directly mention the Holy Spirit as an example for women but the Holy Spirit is a very good and beautiful example of a helper.

When we live in obedience to the principles and roles God has laid down for us in His word, we will test and approve that God's will is:

“... Good, Pleasing and Perfect.” (Romans 12:2 NIV)

Questions to think through:

- What would be a good way that you as a wife could help meet the financial or material needs in your family?
- Are you giving priority to meet the spiritual and emotional needs of your husband and children first?

12
Growing in Unity

**'make my joy complete
by being like-minded,
having the same love,
being one in spirit and purpose.
Do nothing out of selfish ambition
or vain conceit,
but in humility consider others (the other)
better than yourselves.'**
Philippians 2:2-3 (NIV)

We have seen that the purpose of marriage is unity. 'The two shall become one.' For two completely different persons to become one, however, is not an easy thing. It takes a lot of hard work. No matter how much we feel in love at the beginning of our marriage, this feeling will only last for about two years. But they are two precious years to develop real love for each other.

A marriage is a relationship between two equally valuable persons, who both have spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. On top of that, there are no perfect people and no perfect families. Each one of the partners comes bringing his and her own measure of brokenness into the marriage. (To reduce the potential problems in a marriage, is very important that people work through their emotional problems before they get married.) The purpose is unity, but unity does not provide us with food. So somebody has to get out to work. The one who stays home is left with a lot of other work to do from morning till evening.

Children are a blessing from God, but they require much work. It takes a lot of hard work, energy and attention for them to mature properly through childhood and puberty into spiritually, emotionally and physically mature persons who can be a blessing to others. This is a big challenge for both of the marriage partners. It takes an effort to even have an evening together. As we are created to have relationship, however, raising children is also one of the most meaningful things in life to do together.

Sadly a lot of people don't make it. They give up or they never grow into a mutually satisfying relationship.

Say for example, if someone wants to own a motorcycle and be able to ride it, he starts practicing how to ride, taking lessons learning all the rules and learning how to ride. At the end there will be a test, if you pass, you will get your license and know you will be able to ride safely. Then you set out to purchase the motorcycle. Most people spend months selecting the one best suiting their needs. Then after buying one, they insure it. Finally they can ride freely enjoying their motorcycle for years and years. Well that is if: they keep on putting petrol in the bike, if they service it once in a while, changing the oil etc. , change the tires before they wear out and if they keep the rules of traffic. The servicing of the engine of course needs to be done by qualified mechanics who know what they are doing.

What about marriage? Most people just get married and that's it. They expect to be happy for the rest of their lives. Guess what? It does not work that way. After a few years they get stuck and their marriage does not work anymore.

Marriage requires a lot of preparation and maintenance.

What can we do to prepare?

- We can read books on marriage.
- We can seek pre-marital counseling.
- Seek as much advice as you can from your parents and leaders.

What can we do to maintain a good marriage?

- We can keep on reading and studying good books on marriage together.
- We can go to marriage seminars.
- We can seek counsel of people specialized in marriage counselling.
- We should keep living according to the rules God has laid down for us in His Word.

Hopefully this book will help you to prepare and maintain a good marriage. There are many other good books dealing with different aspects of personality differences, communication, parenting, etc. which are very useful to study to be able to grow in your marriage. In this booklet, we have only dealt with some biblical foundational roles for marriage to help you lay a foundation for a good and satisfying marriage. You will have to keep on working to maintain your marriage year after year.

The extended family

In this booklet we have not dealt with the extended family. Many people in Asia live in an extended family which has a lot of advantages, but can also cause a lot of tension and struggles.

I hope it is clear that although Genesis 2:24 (NIV) says that '*a man will leave his father and mother,*' it does not mean that he should forsake his father and mother. 1 Timothy 5:8 makes it clear that if we do not provide for our immediate family (which include elderly parents), we are worse than unbelievers. But it does clearly say that a marriage starts with leaving. It is the beginning of a new unity of which the husband, and not his father or mother is the head.

I will not try to deal with this situation but I hope that with the role models laid down in this book, you can adjust in whatever situation. With patience, love and understanding, make your parents aware of how you want to live your life. Do not forsake them. Make room in your life to look after their emotional and material needs as well. They are the ones through whom God has given you life.

Appendix 1

Resources in India

In India we have been blessed with some very good ministries who are giving a lot of help in the area of marriage, family and personal development.

For good books on marriage, family and personal development, you can try to visit one of the OM bookstores in Secunderabad, Bangalore, Kochi, Chennai, Mumbai, Calcutta, Shillong and Aizawl. Their books are also available via local Christian bookstores.

<http://www.ombooksdistribution.in/aboutus.php>

For counseling and advice, you can contact, Person to Person.

This is an Institute for Christian Counseling and they give marriage as well as pre-marital seminars all over the country. They also have an office for personal counseling in Secunderabad.

<https://persontoperson.org/>

You can email them at: ptpcounsel@gmail.com