

"MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM"

Genesis 1:27



**THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE APPLY
THE SCRIPTURAL ROLES OF
MAN AND WOMAN**

IN THE HOME

There probably isn't a better place to go to begin to understand the scriptural relationship of man and woman than to your own church where a bride and groom are standing before the altar and are about to be joined together in marriage. The pastor reminds them, from God's Word, that marriage is a loving companionship created by God Himself, a companionship which He promises to bless and for which He gives His own counsel and direction.

The pastor reminds the husband of God's specific direction to him: that he is to love his wife as Christ loved His bride the Church and even laid down His life for her. "*In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives,*" Ephesians 5:28. The husband is the head of the wife. He will exercise that responsibility by loving, cherishing, protecting and supporting the wife the Lord is giving to him and seeing to it that the home they are establishing is a truly Christian home in which Christ is always the unseen head and the Word is taught to all in love and in truth.

The pastor then reminds the bride, from the same Word of God, that she is to submit to her husband as Christ's bride, the church, submits to Him. She is to live for her husband who is ready to die for her. She is to be a God-pleasing helper, working with her husband to establish a Christian marriage and home.

Since both husband and wife have their sinful human natures, they will at times fail in their marital responsibilities and will not always show each other the love and respect they should. To keep this from tearing apart what God has joined together they will daily turn to God's Word for forgiveness and for the strength to improve their own marital commitment and to forgive each other for Jesus' sake.

Strengthened by that Word they will live together as heirs of the gracious gift of life (1 Peter 3:8), and their home here on earth will become, more and more, a blessed foretaste of our eternal home in heaven. They will realize how true that catechism verse is:

*"Let each his lesson learn with care,
and all the household well shall fare."*

IN THE CHURCH

It should come as no surprise that when Christians leave their homes and gather for worship, fellowship, and instruction in God's house, God doesn't abandon or reverse the order He has established for the home but prescribes it also for the Church. (1 Corinthians 14:33-35). Those who have been given headship and responsibilities in the home have that same position in the church - under Christ, of course.

Christian men consider their church to be their spiritual family. They regard the female members of their congregations as their sisters in Christ. If there is a considerable age difference, they will even treat them with the love and respect which a Christian son ought to show his mother (1 Timothy 5:2).

In that loving spirit, they will assume their God-given responsibility in the church for the good of all the members. They will cheerfully, even sacrificially, give of their time and energy to oversee the business of God's House, to see to it that God's Word is taught in truth and that programs of Bible study and instruction in sound doctrine are made available to all members of their spiritual family. They will foster good stewardship and fellowship, promote and participate in energetic programs of outreach and evangelism, and show loving concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of every member. They will strive to be men full of the Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3) and will seek that Spirit and wisdom from the Holy Scriptures.

Just as Christian husbands strive to bring joy into the lives of their God-given wives, so Christian men in the congregation will consider the spiritual needs of their sisters in Christ and will strive to do all in their power to make their worship and fellowship edifying and delightful. They will also do all they can to recognize the gifts of their spiritual sisters, seek their input, develop programs in which those gifts can be used in a God-pleasing way in the service of the Lord and

of His Church, and encourage them to joyfully participate in such service.

Just as in the Christian home so also in the Christian Church, Christian women will recognize the headship of their brothers in Christ. They will cheerfully help and serve in any way they can and, in loving obedience to Christ the true head of the church, accept the scriptural restriction that they *are not permitted to teach or have authority over the man*. (1 Timothy 2:11-12). For the strength to do this they too will turn to Christ, to the Word, and to the Spirit.

As Christian men and women worship and serve together in this way in the church, they will experience what Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:16: "*From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*"

IN THE ORDER OF CREATION

As brother and sisters in Christ, we also realize from God's Word that our roles in the home and in the church rest upon God's ancient order of creation. (1 Timothy 2:13, 1 Corinthians 11:8-9). That order was perfect. It was created for our good, and if man and woman had not fallen into sin and lost the image of God, they would have been able to live according to God's order. Sin, however, destroyed their perfect relationship with God and with one another. When the Holy Spirit, by the power of the Gospel, brings people to faith He also begins to restore that lost image of God in their hearts and lives. By the power of the Gospel they also begin to grow in the ability and desire to live in their God-assigned roles for Jesus's sake.

IN THE WORLD

Unlike the Christian home and the Christian Church the unregenerate world is not motivated by the Gospel or guided by God's will. In fact, to the world that all seems rather foolish.

Our great commission regarding the unregenerate world, which is

lost in unbelief and living in spiritual darkness, is that we first of all go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, to seek thereby to win them for Christ and for salvation. Accepting God's will regarding Christian living and role relationships is not something which can precede saving faith but must come as a result or a fruit of it. Therefore, we do not try to force our morality upon the world (1 Corinthians 5:12), but will seek to influence the world by being witnesses for Christ and by letting the light of our good works shine.

Just how do we as Christians allow our light to shine before the world on this particular issue? The Table of Duties in our Catechism reminds us that we do this by submitting to all civil authorities that God has placed over us and by obeying all who are over us in the work place, just as we obey Christ. When we, as Christian men and Christian women, are placed into positions of authority in the world, we will try to administer that authority in Christian love and concern for those who are under us, always remembering that the Lord and Master of us all is in heaven and has told us that the humble, loving, serving mind which was in Him should also be in us in all our relationships with one another.

Since the unregenerate world is often cruel, self-centered and even godless, Christian women, who must live and work in that environment, will not have the protection of the Gospel's influence as they do in the Christian home and in the Christian Church. In Luke 22:35-36 Jesus told His disciples that they would soon be going out into an environment where they would find it necessary to carry a purse, and even a sword. Christian love and concern will keep us from imposing undue restrictions upon, and binding the consciences of, Christian women when they must go out and live, work, manage their property, fulfill their responsibilities as citizens, support themselves and their families, and defend themselves, in a sinful hostile environment.

In another document on this subject we stated that, "We reject the opinion that all women are always subject to all men as an exaggeration of what the Scriptures teach." The roles of man and woman is an application of God's Law, but it is an application which

must always be made in love, for as Scripture clearly teaches, "*Love is the fulfilling of the Law.*"

Finally, there's a way in which Christian men in particular can allow their light to shine. The love and concern they show for the women in their homes and churches, the love and concern which they show to all people with whom they come into contact in every way in their daily lives, is a love and concern which they should always strive to show towards all women. They should be concerned about the women's feelings and well being, always striving to do all they can to keep them from being used and abused in this sinful world.

This is the spirit in which we apply the roles of man and woman in the various phases of our lives. May God give us all that spirit for Jesus' sake.

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For further information and further study on this subject cf.

- 1) The Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles - COP
- 2) "A Bible Study On Man and Woman in God's World"

by Prof. John Brug