

How to succeed in marriage

An article by
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early draft – incomplete ~ but worth sharing

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HOW TO SUCCEED IN MARRIAGE

This is yet another of those topics which you would imagine is regularly preached on by pastors and written about by Christian authors given that it is so crucially important. But it isn't. Indeed, it is barely ever mentioned, as are related topics such as courtship, feminism, the roles of men and women, and the differences between them.

All of these subjects have become "hot potatoes" which are far too controversial for most leaders to be willing to touch them, even with a barge pole. But we can't have that. Issues are there to be dealt with, taught and discussed and we won't succeed unless we do.

Quite apart from that, there is also the need to counteract the poisonous influence the unsaved world has on all these issues. Unlike the churches, they are eager to push their ideology. So, if you don't respond to all that by telling the truth, you and your congregation (if you are a leader) are going to be led astray. That cannot fail to happen when the world's views on sex and marriage are poured into our minds as if from a firemen's hose while the biblical view is given to us like drips from a tap, if even that.

So, I will aim to cover the following issues in this article and the corresponding talks:

- a) Why did God make us male and female?
- b) Do men and women have different roles within the marriage, the home and the church? If so, what are those differences?
- c) Is a wife meant to submit to her husband? If so, what does 'submit' mean and why is it needed?
- d) What is feminism and how is it contrary to what the Bible teaches?
- e) What is the effect on individuals, families, and the nation as a whole, of the "permissive society" whereby fornication, adultery and divorce are considered acceptable and even advantageous?
- f) How to succeed in marriage
- g) How you should treat your wife
- h) How you should treat your husband
- i) Why women must not be elders, or preach to a church or have authority over men in the church
- j) What must a father be and do?
- k) What must a mother be and do?
- l) The need for courage to swim against the tide and defy society's conventions

Why did God make us male and female?

Have you ever asked yourself why God made you a male or a female? Was it by random chance or for a good reason? I put it to you that it was all entirely deliberate and for good reasons, just as He had His reasons for giving us two arms, not three or four, and just as He gave you a thumb rather than a fifth finger. All of God's design features for the human body, and everything else He created, was made that way for a reason.

Therefore, accept that He chose your gender and made you what you are and give thanks for it. Don't argue about it or consider it to have no purpose or reason. God wants you to be what he made you to be and to act as He intended you to act. That means gladly embracing your gender and your maleness or femaleness and behaving in a masculine or feminine way in accordance with His purpose for you.

Our gender is a major part of who we are, and not only so that we can have children. God's purposes extend far beyond the biology of pregnancy and childbirth. You might give birth several times but it would still only be brief and occasional episodes. You would continue to be female on all the thousands of days when you don't give birth and God has a purpose for all of those days as well.

Men and women have difference roles in marriage, the home and the Church

This is an unpopular view to hold, and even more so to express, which is why so few preachers ever touch upon these issues. It would cause unrest and departures from the church if any paster preached the things I am about to say. It is only because my church is a small house church, where they already know how radical I am, that I can speak as I do without being pilloried.

Let me state the position clearly. God intends for men to act like men and look like men. And He wants women to act and look like women. He wants us to be very different and to value and respect the complementary roles that men or women are called to perform.

So, let us begin with marriage. God intends that the husband should lead and the wife should follow. This is the natural order of things and is even reflected in the way we dance. In order to follow, the wife needs to submit to her husband, but only to him, not to men in general. The submission in this sense is only intended for the marriage, not for other relationships. Thus, one might point to the classic example of Mrs Margaret Thatcher who was Prime Minister for 11 years with immense power. Yet, as a devout Christian, she always submitted to her husband, Dennis, though only to him.

This issue of submission is like a red rag to a bull and produces a lot of angry objection, as if submission means inferiority or worthlessness and that only the leader has status, not the one who follows, yields and submits. That is not how God sees it and neither does it feel like that to a wise husband or a wise wife. They both realise that the role of the husband is in many ways the more difficult path with the greatest sacrifices.

That is because godly leadership of the kind a husband must aim for involves being a protector and provider. It also means covering and shielding his wife from the attacks of the world and the demons and taking the flak which would otherwise have fallen upon her. I recall an episode where our family was walking in the countryside and we were crossing a field of cows. They were of the very long horned type and one of them suddenly showed interest in my wife and walked towards her. My wife

then ran and hid herself behind me, to protect her from the horns and so that I could deal with the situation.

Our daughter was laughing about this afterwards and teasing her Mum saying, “*So, it’s alright for Dad to be gored to death as long as you’re alright?*” My wife replied, “*When you’ve got a husband you’ll do the same.*” This story illustrates the wider point about protection and about it being the husband’s duty, as leader, to face the danger alone, keeping it away from his wife. Moreover, my wife did exactly what God intended her to do, i.e. what was natural and right.

The husband’s leadership extends also to being the provider for his family and to work hard and put in long hours if need be to make sure they have what they need. That doesn’t mean that wives should not go out to work, especially before children arrive on the scene. But afterwards, when there are children, it is generally speaking God’s will that the husband should go out and be the provider while the wife stays at home to be a homemaker, to nurture the children, and to create a haven of peace for the husband to return to each day.

That is not to say that there are never any exceptions to this. It is a pattern, not a rigid rule. So, it may be that both spouses will work, caring for the children in turn. There may be no practical alternative if money is very scarce. Or it may even be that the husband stays at home full time where that suits their situation, for example where the wife has an established well paid job and the husband is happy to care for the children. But it is not the norm and does not fit the pattern which God intends for most of us.

What does it mean for a wife to submit?

Let me make clear, if you are reaching for a rotten tomato to throw at me, that submission is not my idea. Contrary to what some people seem to think, I didn’t write the Bible myself and am only passing on what it says as a messenger. So, submission is God’s idea, not mine, and it is not open to debate or negotiation. We are to obey Him on this issue just as much as on any other and He will judge us on whether we did.

²¹ Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²² Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. 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 mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; ³³ however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5:21-33 (RSV)

Moreover, in case anyone thinks that the submission point is just Paul’s idea. We are also given clear guidance by Peter:

¹ Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ² when they see your reverent and chaste behavior. ³ Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of fine clothing, ⁴ but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵ So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you.

⁷ Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Peter 3:1-7 (RSV)

Let me make clear that submission is not about the wife conceding that she is inferior, less important or second class. From God's perspective, husbands and wives are equal in status and He values them equally, just as I value my son and daughter equally even though I relate to them differently, do different things with them and discuss different topics.

None of that causes me to think my son is more valuable or more important than my daughter. They are different but equal and I don't have any difficulty in grasping that. Therefore, why should it be hard to grasp in the context of how God views husbands and wives?

The point about submission is that God has arranged for there to be an order in marriage whereby God is at the top, guiding and protecting the husband and requiring his submission. Then there is the wife who submits to the husband just as he submits to God, and he then guides, protects and provides for her just as God does for him. Then there are the children who must submit to both their mother and father.

¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. ²² Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ.
Colossians 3:18-24 (RSV)

This arrangement might be likened to a series of umbrellas with which God shelters and protects the husband and then the husband holds up his umbrella to shelter the wife who, in turn holds up her umbrella to protect the children. But in marriage, it isn't rain that we are being protected from but all the attacks, lies and malice of the world and the demons.

A wife who is genuinely in submission to her husband will be protected from much of that, whereas if she is in rebellion, for whatever reason, she will be hit by the flak which God intended her husband to take on her behalf so that she would not need to face it. Then, of course, God will protect the husband from that if he is genuinely submitted to Jesus and following Him. But it must be done in that order. God may not necessarily give that protection to a wife who is in rebellion against her husband due to resentment, envy, anger or whatever else.

When you look at it in that way and see all the benefits which are available to a wife who submits then it surely becomes the obvious thing to do, even if it goes against the social conventions of our fallen world and our apostate churches.

But apart from all that, submission results in a much happier and more peaceful marriage in which the husband and wife can both prosper and become what God always intended them to be. In part that is because they have the full support of the other instead of being undermined, criticised, belittled or sniped at.

It makes a lot more sense if we look at some of the differences between men and women. I am told that besides the obvious differences of anatomy, there are over 2,500 differences between men and women, primarily in the way they think, act and speak and how they see the world. For example, a woman has a very strong need to be loved and for that love to be demonstrated in words and actions on a regular basis. And she will be sure to punish her husband if he fails to provide this.

But the husband has no such need or desire. No man has a longing for his wife to express love towards him. What he wants is very different. He wants his wife to *respect and admire* him and to say so regularly and to express it also in her actions.

But the vast majority of couples have no idea about this difference in what each needs from the other. Instead, they will sometimes try to give the other what they want for themselves, such that the wife tries to show love to her husband, which he isn't asking for, and hardly even notices, given that love is not what he wants. Thus, his wife's attempts to please him by showing love will fall flat because what he actually wanted her to do was to respect him and what he has achieved in his career or otherwise and about which he wants her admiration and reassurance.

But the wife doesn't provide that respect. It would never occur to her to do so since that type of respect is not something she has ever wanted for herself. What she wants is love, not respect, which makes it baffling to her why her husband doesn't show love to her or seem to want it for himself.

At some point there needs to be a moment of realisation where each spouse realises what the other wants and begins to force themselves to provide it, even though it seems alien to them as they have never sought it for themselves.

Realistically, this has to begin with the husband because God has designed the man to be the initiator, the one who starts things, even to the extent of being the one who must propose marriage or ask a girl out. Our very nature recoils from the idea that the natural order be reversed and for the woman to be the initiator.

Therefore, the man needs to begin to express love, even at a time when his wife is not showing him respect. Indeed, she may be actively undermining him, even in public, as any angry, bitter woman will do if she has felt unloved. But the husband must brace himself and persist in showing her love even if she doesn't immediately respond to it.

As to how to show love, in practical terms, it requires the husband to act in ways which do not come naturally to the vast majority of men. That means being demonstrative and using touch as a way of showing love rather than only saying it. So, go to your wife and *put your arms around her*, when she is not expecting it, and then embrace her. This will have the effect of melting most women, even in the midst of a blazing row, and she will respond to it by changing her whole tone and demeanour.

But, of course, this type of tactile “love-y dovey” behaviour is alien to most men. It does not come naturally to them or even occur to them at all. Therefore, in the early days you must force yourself to do it artificially, by sheer will power, and take hold of her in your arms. Then tell her how much you love her and how precious she is to you. That is what she wants to hear.

You need not mention how much you respect her or how impressed you are with the way she does her job because *99% of women aren't seeking such respect* and it will mean little or nothing to them. *They just want love* and it would be difficult to overdose on that so don't worry about overdoing it.

Let's now turn around and look at a situation where a Christian wife, who has acquired some wisdom, wants to improve her marriage. Even though the husband is meant to be the initiator, she can help him out by going first and giving him what he craves for even before he gives her the love she so badly wants. Therefore, the wife could look for situations in which she could express respect and admiration for her husband, for his talents, his achievements, and the way he does his job or leads in the church or in the family. All such praise will be eagerly received and will make a real difference.

Moreover, having been given what he craves for he is much more likely to give his wife the love she seeks. Thus, although it is not the normal pattern for the wife to go first, it is the right thing to do if the wife happens to be the more experienced as a Christian and realises what is happening before her husband does.

That is the exception, however, and it is generally the man who needs to take the lead and give love even in the midst of a row in which his wife is shouting at him and disrespecting him. I can recall instances, years ago, when my wife was in a rage and erupting like a volcano, telling me my faults and reminding me of things I had done years before, not just from earlier that day.

I can recall how difficult it was to keep my own temper in check and to approach the ‘volcano’ in full eruption mode and put my arms around her, hold her tightly and tell her how much I loved her. The response was always dramatic and instantaneous. She would immediately melt, stop shouting and tell me how sorry she was. Then I would say sorry too, even if I felt I wasn't at fault. Who was right or wrong is no longer important at that moment. All that counts is putting the fire out. So, say sorry regardless of whether or not you were at fault. You were probably more at fault than you realise.

But the outcome was very different on those occasions where I hadn't yet realised how to deal with a woman in full anger mode. In those early days in our marriage, I would stay calm, and never joined in with the shouting, which is good. However, what was not good is that I would calmly and logically tell her that she was mistaken and was over reacting etc.

Women don't want to hear any of your calm logic, no matter how gently you say it. They are operating in their emotions, not their minds, at least at that moment, and they need you to engage with them at the level of emotion and feelings, not facts, figures or logic. Men would save themselves from an awful lot of wasted time spent in futile arguments, even if they are 100% right on the facts and logic, if they would only learn and apply this lesson.

You have to “*melt*” your wife first and stop the volcano erupting before you can have any meaningful, coherent discussion of the underlying facts that gave rise to the dispute. However, I would not be in any hurry to resume the dispute or to try to establish who was right and wrong. Leave that for another time, if at all, or you run the risk of undoing all your good work.

The poisonous influence of feminism

I view feminism as a cancer which has caused terrible harm, not only in the unsaved world but even within churches. I am sure there are some church leaders who preach against feminism and expose the harm it does, but I have never come across one, either in churches or in audio sermons or Christian books. I can't believe that the silence is due to leaders seeing it as unimportant. They must be able to see it. Instead, I believe their silence is due to fear of being criticised and losing members if they denounce it.

Let me therefore do my small bit to redress the balance. I believe that seeing the deception and understanding it will enable many of us to be set free from the pernicious influence that feminist teaching has had, even on those who are entirely unconscious of the effect it has had upon them.

The basic definition of feminism is the belief that men and women are equal, which of course they are, but they have also added the belief that this 'equality' is being hindered or undermined by men. They refer to this alleged influence of men as the 'patriarchy' and maintain that as a result of that women are suppressed, oppressed and treated as second class citizens.

When the feminist movement first began in the late 19th century and early 20th century, it was limited to procuring the vote for women and the right for married women to own property in their own name. It developed further such that by the 1970s it was about securing equal pay for women doing the same jobs as men in shops, offices or factories. I have no objections at all to any of that. But the problem is that the feminist movement didn't stop at that.

By the 1960s and 1970s and even more so in the last 20 years or so, it has developed into a harsh, angry message in which they demand that women should be treated as if they were men and that the differences between them are a source of oppression. Therefore, it has become a strident, aggressive ideology whereby women are put under pressure to go out to work rather than look after their own children. Instead, they are urged to place their children in the care of the State – so those children can be moulded by the State's propoganda.

They also push a sense of anger towards men, attaching blame to men for any problems they face as well as hostility to male bosses at work. Above all, there is a rejection of the very concept of the husband having authority over his wife. That idea is scorned and ridiculed and one sees that in particular in films and TV programmes where women are shown as strong confident characters who "*don't need no man*". We therefore see female police officers on TV programmes tackling men, putting them forcibly into handcuffs while male officers flounder about ineffectively and are seen as incompetent and weak.

Of course, anyone who has served in the police, as I have, will tell you that it is virtually impossible for any woman to forcibly arrest a man if they don't come quietly. That is why the two female officers on my shift of 20 officers were never asked to engage in any physical combat or struggle. We didn't expect them to fight or want them to. The whole thing therefore is an illusion but it is promoted because feminism has an agenda which it wishes to pursue and the truth doesn't come into it.

If our definition of feminism is simply that women should be allowed to vote and should receive equal pay to men if they do the same job then I don't have any objection to it and I don't believe God does either. But that is no longer the definition, at least for a great many women, and men too, who push the whole anger, bitterness and resentment dimension of feminism.

What then does God think about men and women generally, and husband and wives in particular? As stated, He believes there are many differences between us and that those differences were created by Him deliberately. So, God wants men to be strong, masculine and protective and to provide for their wives and children. Whether going out to work is harder or easier than staying at home to look after children is a matter for others to judge. I think both roles are difficult and can leave you exhausted and frazzled by the end of the day.

God also wants the husband to lead and the wife to follow. That is why God has created the man with a strong tendency to operate in and through his mind, not his emotions or feelings. I discuss this in my Book 7 on the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and go into some detail on it so I would refer you to that.

The woman, on the other hand, has a tendency, on average, to operate in and through her emotions rather than her mind and to make decisions based on how she feels, not on what she thinks. There is, of course, a place for taking feelings into account when making decisions but it should only be a secondary place as feelings are not reliable. So, her husband should listen to her and take her feelings into account.

But, ultimately, God wants important decisions to be made primarily on the basis of facts, figures, logic and deductive reasoning. That is why most women, not all, are indecisive and afraid to make big decisions. They are not designed or equipped to be decision makers.

That is certainly so in my wife's case. She much prefers me to decide matters – and to take the blame if it goes wrong! But that's alright because I have no fear of making decisions and make them easily, without worrying about being to blame. I think that applies in most marriages, even where neither spouse has ever thought about it.

What does God think about the “permissive society”?

For many centuries there have been strict codes of conduct, even for non Christians, governing sex whereby it was restricted only to married couples. Obviously, some people broke those rules but the vast majority did not, and sex before marriage was condemned as fornication.

Sex outside of a marriage was called adultery and divorce was rarely ever seen and in most cases was not legally possible to obtain. The question is whether people were happier then or now, given the total breakdown of those rules and taboos.

I would say that the permissive society experiment, which began in the 1960s and has only gathered pace since then has made nobody happy. Neither has it made any person feel secure, peaceful or confident, whereby they know that despite any problems they may have, their marriage is a solid rock on which their family is based and that nothing can end it.

Instead, marriages now end rapidly and for the flimsiest of reasons and even that is only for that minority who get married at all. Most don't and simply “live together” with their “partner”. That is a word, by the way, which I refuse to use and I always correct anybody who refers to my wife as my partner if we are in a hotel, shop etc. I tell them she is my wife.

If you add up all the suffering and distress caused by staying in a marriage and working at it diligently, and then compare it to suffering and distress caused by “sleeping around” with multiple sexual partners

before settling down and then breaking up and going your separate ways, taking children away from their fathers other than intermittent visits, then I believe the biblical way is by far the best.

Your marriage is the second most important relationship in your life, after your relationship with God through Jesus Christ. So, to base your marriage (or “partnership”) on sand, as people now do, can only bring insecurity, anxiety, distress and distrust with each ‘partner’ in constant apprehension about being ditched in favour of some other person or of being betrayed by the other party seeking other sexual partners.

Even to write about it is so alien to me. From the day I got married until now it has never once occurred to me, even for a second, that I could leave my wife or get a divorce. It was simply not an option – no matter how much we disagreed or argued. And she felt the same. It meant that when difficulties arose, as they did – and as they do for everyone if they are truthful, we had to work it out together and make peace somehow as we were married and there was “no way out” or “exit door”.

It may not be a romantic way to view marriage but, in this context, it is accurate and it provides many benefits, especially for the wife. In times past, a wife, despite having no income of her own, knew that the ring on her finger gave her absolute security and that she could not be cast aside.

That security, or prison bars if you see it that way, gave many a couple the time they needed to stick at their marriage and learn how to treat each other. Then they would find in their 30s or 40s a contentment and happiness which they didn’t have in their immature 20s. Consider, therefore, how much could have been thrown away and how much happiness in later life could have been lost if the law had allowed them to divorce.

Then ask yourself what real happiness, or even pleasure, is found today between single people who go straight into a sexual relationship on the very day they meet someone and then go their separate ways – having no expectation that the “relationship” would extend beyond that evening. How is that any different from stray dogs copulating in the street?

Therefore, by the time a person reaches the point where they want to settle down and have a family they might easily have had 10, 20 or even 50 sexual partners. That in itself carries a risk not only of catching sexually transmitted diseases but also of becoming exposed to other people’s demons and thus becoming demonised too. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that they could avoid becoming demonised, with all the damage that will bring upon them.

When you consider that the average pastor might well have several couples in the congregation who have lived like this before becoming Christians and settling down, it is easy to see why the pastor will avoid the subject of fornication. It could easily upset those members who have never heard the subject preached on before.

So, I sympathise with that pastor in his difficulty but it isn’t me whom he needs to answer to. What is that pastor going to say at the Judgment Seat of Christ when Jesus goes through his records of the sermons he preached and the topics he avoided. So, I am not judging that pastor but I am warning him that Jesus will judge him on these very points.

But even if we leave aside the older members of the church in their 20s, 30s and 40s, there is surely nothing to prevent that pastor making sure that a proper biblical message is given to the youth group

aged 13 to say 18 and to the adults in their early 20s. That would be a very timely message just when they need to hear it and it might prevent them from ever getting started on the wrong path.

Let us now look briefly at what the Bible has to say about how women should avoid seductive styles of dress. Apostle Paul sets out in this passage how Christian women should dress and behave:

⁸ I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire ¹⁰ but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness.

1 Timothy 2:8-11 (RSV)

Apostle Paul is not objecting to women looking smart, dressing nicely and even wearing some tasteful make up. What he's opposed to is women seeking to use their bodies to attract the attention of men. That must never occur. A married woman has no need to attract men and even single women should restrain themselves just to looking smart and presentable, not provocative or alluring. Dress to please Jesus, not yourself, and certainly not to attract the eyes of men.

How should you treat your wife?

I have already alluded to this but let us look at it in closer detail. The husband must lead and in order to do that he must know that he is supposed to lead or else he will not even try to do it. Indeed, there are many women who have been taught the Bible and who know that it is their husband's role to lead the marriage and the household. There are other wives who just know this instinctively and who positively want their husband to lead and feel frustrated when he doesn't, due to his ignorance of the Bible, or lack of confidence.

Therefore, if you are the husband, ask God to help you to become the leader in your home and to have the confidence to step out in faith to make decisions on behalf of the family, after taking care, of course to hear your wife's views and advice. There is no inconsistency there. A good leader has the confidence to let it be known that he welcomes input and advice and he doesn't think that makes him weak. It makes him the very opposite of weak.

But remember that what God means by being a leader is not what the unsaved world thinks it is. Biblical leadership is servanthood and involves self sacrifice, not self aggrandisement. It is a little like the position of a lieutenant who leads a platoon of 30 men in the Army. For him, leadership means being at the front in any attack and the rear in any retreat, thereby taking upon himself a disproportionate burden of risk.

That is why, if you look at memorial stones on the village green from World War 1 and World War 2, you see a lot of lieutenants, far more than one in every 30, who were killed. It was more like one in every five or six meaning they faced far more danger. If you look as I did at the casualty figures for the Israel Defence Force in 2023-2025 after the attack by Hamas and Hezbollah, the men killed were overwhelmingly officers and NCOs, i.e. captains, lieutenants and sergeants, not privates, because they led from the front and reserved the bulk of the danger to themselves.

It is very similar for a husband. It does not usually involve the risk of death but it can at times, as on the Titanic when the men went down with the ship, reserving all the seats in the lifeboats to women and

children. To that generation in 1912 that seemed the obviously right thing for the men to do, which shows how much attitudes have changed.

But on a day to day basis, the husband's leadership involves taking the grim, dirty, unpleasant jobs for himself and sheltering his wife from them. Thus, whenever confrontation is needed with a shop or business it is always I who tackle it as my wife hates confrontation. Likewise, when a cat or sparrowhawk kills a pigeon on our garden it is my job to pick it up and dispose of the half eaten carcass so that she doesn't need to. The list of such things is endless and the acceptance of those tasks by the husband is the mark of real biblical leadership.

The husband must also be the spiritual leader in the home. He must see to it that he studies and learns the Bible thoroughly so that he can teach it to his wife or at least be equipped to answer her questions when she asks. I have been a student of the Bible now for nearly 45 years and my wife freely concedes that much of what she knows was acquired second hand from me. That is how it should be – not the wife taking the lead and having to urge the husband to study.

Then there is the husband's duty to love his wife. We must not forget that this is a command, not a suggestion. Jesus will hold each of us accountable for whether we have loved our wives and that ought to make us tremble. Loving your wife is a big task and learning how to do it takes a lifetime. But every husband needs to learn how to be romantic and not allow himself to continue as an insensitive oaf who doesn't know what women want or how to give it.

Therefore, don't just spend Saturdays at the hardware shops gazing at power tools or focused on football. There is a place for those things, of course, but a husband needs to appraise himself closely and ask "*What would my wife like to do this Saturday?*" Then arrange to give the day, or most of it, to her, not to yourself. Make her feel valued and precious in your eyes. Make her feel that you thought ahead and had her in your mind and that you chose to make her your priority.

But it needn't be in big ways only. You can learn to give little surprises, especially at unexpected times where you give her flowers or a small gift. These need not be expensive. It really is the thought that counts. Your wife wants to know that you were thinking of her and that she matters to you.

But perhaps the most important thing of all is to be the one who *initiates physical contact* and I do not mean only for sex. A woman loves to be taken by surprise during the day, not just at bedtime, by you taking her in your arms and holding her and telling her how you love her. I believe the touch is more important to her than the words.

Women are designed by God to respond to touch. They are also programmed to want to be loved romantically, which is why apostle Paul commands husbands to love their wives. He does not need to repeat that command to the wife, telling her to love her husband, because they already do.

To love is part of the computer software for a woman and she does it automatically. What does not come naturally to her, however, is to *respect* her husband, which is why Paul has to give that different command to the wife. But we shall examine that below.

How should you treat your husband?

The main thing which apostle Paul commands every wife to do is to respect her husband. The reason he places such emphasis upon this is simple - because most wives don't do it. They love their husbands

but they don't respect them. In that way, they give their husbands something which he doesn't greatly desire or at least not consciously, which is to be loved. But they withhold the one thing he wants above all which is to be respected – especially by his wife.

In some cases, perhaps most, the wife withholds or fails to give respect because she is insensitive, dull of mind and unaware of what her husband needs, despite all his efforts to procure it from her. But in many cases I think the wife knows, not least from apostle Paul's command, that she should respect her husband, and that he craves for it, but she refuses to give it out of spite. She may be acutely conscious that he is not giving her the love she needs and so she won't show him any respect until he starts to love her.

That is understandable, perhaps, but that does not make it right. Neither will it excuse the wife at the Judgment Seat when Jesus examines the extent to which she respected her husband. Wives need to tremble at that grim prospect too, not just husbands.

What then do we mean by respect? How can we define it? I believe that for most men it means being recognised for his achievements, mainly in his job, but also other things too. It also means being admired and, in particular, by his wife. Men are very focused on their jobs and on their achievements and success generally and they want people to notice and to remark upon it with praise. That means a great deal to a man but far less to a woman.

When two or more women meet for the first time they will not discuss their jobs but rather their relationships. So, within five minutes of meeting they will have told each other of their husbands and children and their jobs might not be mentioned at all. Conversely, two or three men meeting for the first time will quickly tell each other what job they do. That is because, to a man he is what he does, whereas women don't see it that way and do not define themselves by their job.

Therefore, insofar as a man desires the recognition of his colleagues for his achievements, he craves for it even more from his wife and it means the world to him to hear her praising him, not only for his job but for all his achievements, talents and qualities. Therefore, even if it doesn't at all match the way you as a woman want to be treated, try to force yourself to think as your husband does and to give him what he wants even when it isn't what you want him to give to you.

However, respect goes far beyond admiring your husband's achievements in his career. It also means *honouring him* in front of people you know and, above all, in front of your children. Let them see that you honour their father and they will honour him too. But if those children see you disrespecting and belittling your husband it can cause grave damage to how they view him.

Take every opportunity therefore to speak well of your husband to your friends and family. Never do what so many foolish women do whereby they reveal secrets, disclose his mistakes and failures and make jokes at his expense. If other women are doing that, don't join in. Let them see you honouring your husband. Indeed, never let anyone hear you doing otherwise.

Why women must never be elders, or preach to a church or have authority over men

Apostle Paul is very blunt about this and makes it very clear that women are not to teach or have authority over men in the church.

¹² I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

1 Timothy 2:12-14 (RSV)

There are a number of reasons why it is God's plan that men should lead in the churches. But the issue Paul focuses on here is that women are more easily deceived. He points to Adam who was not deceived by the serpent, whereas Eve was, which is why she ate the forbidden fruit. So, Adam's sin was not done unconsciously, while deceived. He followed what Eve had done, deliberately, knowingly that it was sin to eat the forbidden fruit, because he didn't want to be parted from her.

But the point here, for our purposes, is that Paul is saying that just as Eve was deceived, it is a trait of women generally to be more prone to being deceived. Thus, to have a church leader who is vulnerable to deception would be a danger to the whole church. The logical, fact based, analytical approach of the average man renders him more protected from deception than the average woman's tendency to rely on her emotions and feelings more so than on her mind and the rigorous analysis of facts and logic.

Therefore, avoiding deception in the church is a major issue and one sees it illustrated in those churches which have appointed female leaders. Very soon they descend into all sorts of other errors and heresies, in particular the pursuit of money or what I call being a "money preacher". There is also a tendency to dabble in counterfeit spiritual gifts whereby false messages are given to the church and endorsed by the women leaders.

But, ultimately, whether we understand God's reasons or not, it is a question of obedience to His commands, which he has set out very clearly, that He wants men to lead. Of course, men are also perfectly capable of going wrong and becoming heretics but they are less likely to do so than female leaders are.

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