

At this time men and women split into two separate groups.

Questions for MEN ONLY are on pages 130–132
and questions for WOMEN ONLY are on pages 133–136

MEN ONLY

C How does a husband fulfil his God-given role?

God intends marriage to be an equal partnership with complementary roles.

SI

1. The way marriage partners relate to each other is vital to a flourishing marriage. Discuss the possible consequences to a marriage if either one of the partners is very dominating or very passive in the relationship.

Important messages for husbands and wives

The BIG PROBLEM for all relationships is that ever since the Fall we have been living with the consequences of the distortion of creation. In the case of husbands and wives this often results in things like: oppression, exploitation and manipulation, none of which are part of God's plan. Neither does He intend the relationship to be skewed out of balance, with one partner overly dominant and the other completely passive. God wants us to 'pull together' in the same direction.

Paul, the apostle, must have seen his fair share of marriage-related issues; he had important messages for husbands and wives in his letter to the Ephesians.

Bible study

²¹Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and

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fitting together as husbands and wives

ASK someone to read out the paragraphs and Bible study passage.

5 MINS

15 MINS

ASK the men to give practical examples as well as general answers from the Bible passage.

If appropriate, ask someone to read the note about submission.

- Ask someone to read the paragraph on principles for a Christlike husband.
- You could divide your time equally between the two case studies or only do one.
- Then **introduce the case studies**. Explain that they are designed to help people apply the principles of a Christlike husband given different personality mixes. Concentrate on the behaviour of the husband, not the wife.
- Ask someone to read a case study and then reflect on the questions.
- Please don't allow your group to get tied up with the characters reflected in the case studies. They are there to encourage discussion and should not be interpreted literally.

SI

SI

Note:
Submission in marriage is not a role. The submission of a wife to her husband reflects the divinely-created order of: God-husband-wife and so it must be seen in the context of the overall headship of Christ. Submission is a **free choice**.

It **cannot be forced**. For a wife, submission is a willing act of support and grows out of an attitude of respect for the husband. It is easier for a wife to submit to her husband when she sees her husband behaving with Christlikeness in the home.

It takes a smart husband to have the last word and not use it.

Anon

blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no-one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church – ³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³²This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:21–33

2. God's plan for our marriages is to model the relationship between Christ and the Church.
 - a. What is the goal or purpose of a Christlike husband?
 - b. According to the passage, how is this achieved?
3. Why do you think some wives find it difficult to submit to their husbands? (Note: This question is not intended to probe the weaknesses of wives! Focus on the behaviour of husbands that may cause wives to struggle in giving respect and support.)

Principles for a Christlike husband

The purpose or goal of a Christlike husband is to enable his wife to fulfil her God-given potential to become BEAUTIFUL in character and behaviour. Growing in our role as a Christlike husband is a life-long process. In Ephesians 5 Paul gives the husband **three important aims – to be:**

- **Loving** – nourish and cherish his wife.
- **Sacrificial** – putting her needs first. Making her his first priority after God.
- **Proactive** – neither dominating nor passive, taking initiative; the emphasis is not on ruling, but on taking responsibility and offering care.

4. Look at the following case studies and questions.

Ben and Bella. *Bella wanted many things for herself and her family. Ben needed to work long hours to fulfil them. The bigger house was essential so the kids didn't have to share a room (the mortgage was only met by overtime). Holidaying for two weeks in the sun was vital in summer. Money was tight and the only way to cut costs was to get Ben to do all the DIY – hence THE LIST. Every weekend his time was scheduled to do all the jobs, which meant he had no leisure time or quality time with Bella and the kids. He understood the logic but sometimes it would have been so nice to go out for a beer with his mates or even enjoy a football match on the*

TV. The only space he did get was when Bella went out with her friends and after he had put the kids to bed. Ben was a quiet sort of person and Bella was lively and outgoing. Whenever he challenged the kids on their behaviour she would always take their side and accuse him of being too strict. After eighteen years of marriage Ben had settled in to 'going with the flow' instead of 'rocking the boat'.

- a. Apply the principles of a Christlike husband, given the personality mixes. How could Ben relate better to Bella in ways that honour God?

Jake and Jane married after a whirlwind romance. Jane was swept off her feet, but now four years later she felt like she had slipped into the role of Jake's mum. She did all the cooking and cleaning, even ironing his socks (just like his mum did)! Jake liked to make all the decisions. He lived life his way, seeing Jane as a pretty accessory on his arm when out with mates. Her needs as he saw them were to have a roof over her head and to be happy in homemaking. They didn't talk much – she knew better than to cross him. She seemed a willing participant in the bedroom although he was the one who would always initiate their love-making. He assumed that she was happy. More recently though he had begun to think that she was 'letting herself go a bit'.

- b. Apply the principles of a Christlike husband given the personality mixes. How could Jake relate better to Jane in ways that honour God?

Foundation Principle:

A husband fulfils his God-given role when he provides Christlike headship.

C How does a husband fulfil his God-given role?

- i. One or two insights from the group discussion that I would like to share with my wife ...
- ii. In order to be a more Christlike husband I think I need to ...

In your Couple Time be prepared to share your thoughts with your wife.

Margaret Thatcher's husband, Dennis, was once asked who wore the pants in his family. 'I do,' he replied. 'And I also wash and iron them.'

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fitting together as husbands and wives

Time check

Write target time here:

(start time plus 95 mins)

ASK someone to read the Foundation Principle and then ask everyone to complete Couple Time preparation box C.

CHECK to see if the other group is ready to rejoin the session.

5 MINS

ASK someone to read out the paragraphs and Bible study passage.

SI

The only thing worse than a man you can't control is a man you can.

Margo Kaufman

At this time men and women come together again. Please turn to page 136.

WOMEN ONLY

C How does a wife fulfil her God-given role?

God intends marriage to be an equal partnership with complementary roles.

1. The way marriage partners relate to each other is vital to a flourishing marriage. Discuss the possible consequences to a marriage if either one of the partners is very dominating or very passive in the relationship.

Important messages for husbands and wives

The BIG PROBLEM for all relationships is that ever since the Fall we have been living with the consequences of the distortion of creation. In the case of husbands and wives this often results in things like oppression, exploitation and manipulation, none of which are part of God's plan. Neither does He intend the relationship to be skewed out of balance, with one partner overly dominant and the other completely submissive. God wants us to 'pull together' in the same direction.

Paul, the apostle, must have seen his fair share of marriage issues; he had important messages for husbands and wives in his letter to the Ephesians.

Bible study

²¹Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no-one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church – ³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹“For

SQ

Do you think that respect needs to be earned? Why? Why not?

SQ

this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”³²This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:21–33

2. The passage says that the ‘wife must respect her husband’.

- a. Why is respecting a husband so important?
- b. How does a wife show respect/disrespect?

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Principles of a Christlike husband and a wife's response

The purpose or goal of a Christlike husband is to enable his wife to fulfil her God-given potential to become BEAUTIFUL in character and behaviour. This is a life-long process and Paul draws the attention of husbands to **three important aspects of a Christlike husband – to be:**

- **Loving** – nourishing and cherishing their wives.
- **Sacrificial** – putting her needs before his own. Making his wife his first priority after God.
- **Proactive** – neither dominating nor passive, taking initiative; the emphasis is not on ruling, but on responsibility and offering care.

The passage is **not** saying that a wife cannot take the initiative or a leading role in some areas of the marriage. It is **not** saying that a wife is a doormat or subservient. She is an equal partner in the marriage. It **is** telling wives to respond to their husbands in a way that respects and supports them, rather than undermining or criticising.

SI

3. Paul emphasises a need for wives to submit to their husbands.

- a. Does submission mean ‘unthinking obedience’? What are the ‘boundaries’?
- b. How is a marriage affected by a wife who willingly submits to her husband's Christlike love and headship? How is it affected by a wife who doesn't willingly submit to her husband's loving headship?
- c. Why do you think that some wives find it difficult to submit to their husbands? (Note: This question is not intended to probe the weaknesses of husbands! Focus on the things that some wives may be struggling with within themselves.)

Note: **Submission in marriage is not a role.** The submission of a wife to her husband reflects the divinely created order of: God–husband–wife. Submission is a **free choice** we make. It **cannot be forced**. For a wife, submission is a willing act of support and grows out of an attitude of respect for the husband. It is easier for a wife to submit to her husband when she sees her husband behaving with Christlikeness in the home.

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10 MINS

If appropriate, ask someone to read the note about submission.

- **ASK** someone to read the paragraph on principles for a wife.
- You could divide your time equally between the two case studies or only do one.
- Then **introduce the case studies**. Explain that they are designed to help people apply the principles of a respecting and supporting wife given different personality mixes. Concentrate on the behaviour of the wife, not the husband.
- Ask someone to read a case study and then reflect on the questions.
- Please don't allow your group to get tied up with the characters reflected in the case studies. They are there to encourage discussion and should not be interpreted literally.

Principles to live by as a wife

Showing respect for her husband – honour, esteem and defer to him. Making him her first priority, after God.

Supporting her husband – working by his side using her unique talents and gifts so that together they fulfil God's purposes. An aspect of support is to willingly acknowledge his headship.

Love undergirds everything. Giving respect and support to a husband are not just the dry duty of a wife, but the out-workings of her love for her husband.

4. Look at the following case studies and questions.

Jake and Jane married after a whirlwind romance. Jane was swept off her feet, but now four years later she felt like she had slipped into the role of Jake's mum. She did all the cooking and cleaning, even ironing his socks (just like his mum did)! Jake liked to make all the decisions. He lived life his way, seeing Jane as a pretty accessory on his arm when out with mates. Her needs as he saw them were to have a roof over her head and to be happy in homemaking. They didn't talk much – she knew better than to cross him. She seemed a willing participant in the bedroom although he was the one who would always initiate their love-making. He assumed that she was happy. More recently though he had begun to think that she was 'letting herself go a bit'.

a. Apply the principles to live by as a wife given the personality mixes. How could Jane relate better to Jake in ways that honour God?

Ben and Bella. Bella wanted many things for herself and her family. Ben needed to work long hours to fulfil them. The bigger house was essential so the kids didn't have to share a room (the mortgage was only met by overtime). Holidaying for two weeks in the sun was vital in summer. Money was tight and the only way to cut costs was to get Ben to do all the DIY – hence THE LIST. Every weekend his time was scheduled to do all the jobs, which meant he had no leisure time or quality time with Bella and the kids. He understood the logic but sometimes it would have been so nice to go out for a beer with his mates or even enjoy a football match on the TV. The only space he did get was when Bella went out with her friends and after he had put the kids to bed. Ben was a quiet sort of person and Bella was lively and outgoing. Whenever he challenged the kids on their behaviour she would always take their side and accuse him of being too strict. After eighteen years of marriage Ben had settled in to 'going with the flow' instead of 'rocking the boat'.

b. Apply the principles to live by as a wife given the personality mixes. How could Bella relate better to Ben in ways that honour God?

ASK someone to read the Foundation Principle and then ask everyone to complete Couple Time preparation box C.

Check to see if the other group is ready to rejoin the session.

MEN AND WOMEN COME TOGETHER AGAIN

Leader to read out the Foundation Principles:

1. God intends for a husband and wife to live in a way that is complementary – NOT competing with each other.
 2. God will help us fit together as we submit our individual hearts and wills and our marriage to Him.
 3. A husband fulfils his God-given role when he provides Christlike headship.
 4. A wife fulfils her God-given role when she respects and supports her husband.
- Encourage couples to do their Couple Time. There are no optional additional questions.
 - Explain how you are going to approach the final session (make it the last meeting as a group or have another meeting with a celebration meal at a later time?).

Foundation Principle:

A wife fulfils her God-given role when she respects and supports her husband.

C How does a wife fulfil her God-given role?

- i. One or two insights from the group discussion that I would like to share with my husband ...
- ii. In order to be a more supportive and respectful wife I think I need to ...

In your Couple Time be prepared to share your thoughts with your husband.

Why does a woman work ten years to change a man's habits and then complain that he's not the man she married?

Barbra Streisand

Time check

Write target time here:

(start time plus 95 mins)

At this time men and women come together again.

... And finally

Take a minute to review the Foundation Principles for the session.

If you have time share some of the highlights from your discussion.

Agree on a date in your diaries for your Couple Time:

Time check

Write target finish time here:

(start time plus 100 mins)

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5 MINS

5 MINS