

False analogy demeans women; discourages men; breeds discord; overturns Scripture



Duty and desire again necessitate a correction of yet another facet of the husband/wife relationship. For those without husbands or wives who would rather see Part 2 of “Death of the Old Humanity” thank you for bearing with me. Your married friends and family members need this information, and they need it now. I am about to disprove a false “Scriptural” analogy that demeans woman, discourages men, breeds discord and resentment among the sexes, and ultimately overturns rightly-interpreted Scripture. So please take the time to read this yourself and forward it to those you think it would help.

I am compelled to correct a teaching of my beloved colleague Clyde Pilkington, this time from a talk he delivered in September in Vancouver, Washington at a conference that I also attended. (See link to this video below.) Something struck me funny about the talk at

the time but I did not see clearly and cleanly into the matter until now. It's about God's timing. This is not to disparage my colleague, for I too once held the view that I am about to destroy. Were this but a minor adjustment, I would be writing Part 2 of “Death of the Old Humanity.” My critique does not primarily concern the man who delivered this address, but only the viewpoint delivered. The way I see it, marriages are literally imperiled. My colleague never intended this. Therefore, this is not about him, but rather about how his teaching could easily be understood and consequently abused.

GETTING TO THE POINT

Once again, we look to Ephesians 5:25-31 and Paul's charge to husbands to love their wives according as Christ loves the ecclesia. Two weeks ago I explained the phrase “according as,” and then highlighted the importance of the word “thus” in verse 28. In verse 28, Paul finally explains the one aspect of Christ he had in mind for husbands to imitate: “Thus, the husbands also ought to be loving their own wives as their own bodies.” The single point of Paul's analogy is that, as Christ cherished the ecclesia rather than destroyed it, husbands are to cherish rather than physically mistreat their wives.

Paul produces a case in point (Christ) of how a stronger vessel is to treat a weaker vessel. To extend the analogy beyond its intended boundaries not only violates the context and the point, but ultimately threatens rather than helps the husband/wife relationship. For instance, to insist that, because Christ accepted a death sentence in order to hallow, cleanse and perfect an ecclesia (verses 25-27), therefore a husband must, with single-minded, all-consuming purpose, dedicate the whole of his existence to catering to the needs of his sinning wife, is a misuse of the context. What wife, expecting such Christ-like zeal, will be anything but disappointed? If one insists upon this tack, one may as

well go all the way and insist that the husband be crucified. No one goes this far; but no one should be on this tack in the first place. Paul is *not* here saying that a husband is just like Christ and a wife is just like the ecclesia, but is rather forwarding a single point of harmony (“harmony” being the meaning of “according as”), reiterated by him in verse 29, “for no one at any time hates his own flesh.” As Jesus cherished the body of Christ; a husband is to cherish his wife’s body. The common denominator is “body”; body of Christ/body of the wife.

It is easy to fall into the thinking that Paul is forwarding a wholesale comparison of husbands to Christ, and wives to the ecclesia. For years, I tripped here myself. An analysis of the phrase “according as” cured me, but especially illuminating was noting the vital and heretofore unappreciated “thus” of verse 28. It is Christ’s behavior toward the ecclesia in *one* aspect—rather than in the entire catalog of His sufferings—that the husband is implored to imitate. Likewise, Paul does not forward the ecclesia as a type of the wife, as if to say, “wives are a lot like the ecclesia.” The extent to which this demeans and cripples a wife’s spiritual growth will soon be seen. Just as there are many ways in which a husband is not Christ, there are many ways in which a wife is not an ecclesia. In fact, in each case there are more dissimilarities than likenesses. An exaggerated example of this in another field will clarify the point:

“Third-grade students, tackle your homework according as Dick Butkus tackled running backs.”

In this analogy, we’re comparing third-grade students to the legendary Chicago Bears linebacker. Additionally, we’re comparing homework to running backs. In how many ways does a third-grade schoolgirl resemble Dick Butkus? I can think of very few. In how many ways does a pile of school papers resemble a football running back? Again, I can think of very few. As A.E. Knoch writes concerning Scriptural analogies:

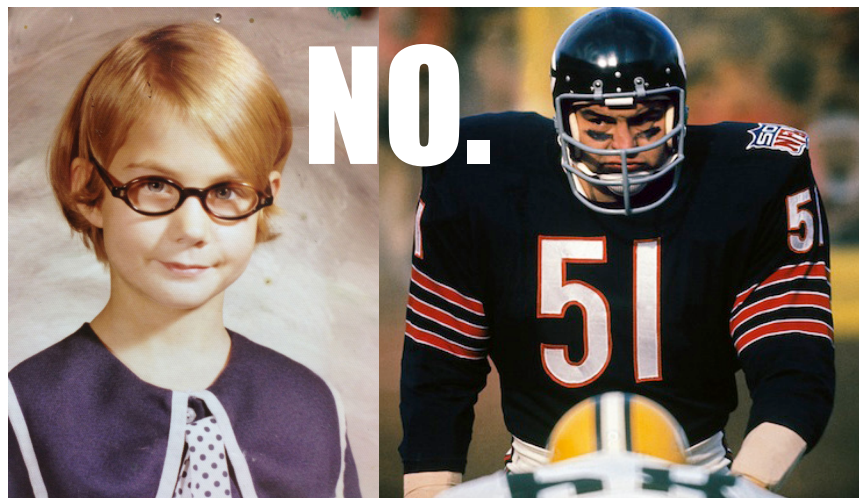
Figures, especially those of likeness, must be strictly limited to the point, or points, of contact, for it is axiomatic that there is unlikeness in all other particulars. The force of the simile depends on *unlikeness* rather than likenesses. They must never be used as if they were true in fact. Therefore it is unwise to use figures of speech as a basis of reasoning, for the points of contact are *limited* to

those stated or apparent, and they may not be extended to other relations. Thus when Paul speaks of betrothing the Corinthians to Christ, he refers only to their singleness and purity. The figure does not include any other aspect of betrothal or refer in any way to marriage. It is confusing to connect it with such figures.

Precisely so here. My colleague uses a comparison between two entities (husbands and Christ; wives and the ecclesia) as a basis of reasoning. That is, he jumps off the deep end of it to form a new, unwarranted conclusion that, as we shall see, dashes the expectations of both sexes while contradicting other Scripture. This is the critical mistake; again, I used to make it myself. Rather than strictly limiting the likeness to the stated point (introduced by Paul’s “Thus” of verse 28), my colleague extends the likeness to other unintended relations. The result is errant teaching. Mr. Knoch’s example of Paul betrothing the ecclesia to Christ “as a chaste virgin” (2 Corinthians 11:2) is a great example. Paul states the purpose of the analogy in verse 3, saying that he doesn’t want the Corinthians “corrupted from the singleness and pureness which is in Christ.” To ignore that single point of contact between the mainly *unlike* objects of comparison—a chaste virgin and Christ—leads to all sorts of error, such as “the body of Christ is the same as the bride of the Lamb,” or, “believers must be virgins.”

When Isaiah writes that “all flesh is grass,” we immediately grasp the point that, like grass, flesh withers. Other than this, what possible similarities can be drawn between grass and skin? They are as disparate as can be.

Anyone reading my homework/football analogy immediately grasps the point: in the manner in which Dick Butkus tackled opposing players—with desire and dedication—thus also students are to tackle their homework. Anyone putting a picture of a third-grade girl next to Dick Butkus and attempting to draw further analogies other than



the one intended, or, worse, insisting that Dick Butkus now becomes a role model for how the young girl ought to behave at school (“rough people up”; “snarl a lot”; “stare people down”; “drink lots of beer”); not only misses the point of the analogy, but sets a course for the poor girl not intended for her; this was Butkus’ course, not hers.

We make a similar mistake should we place a photo of Christ next to that of a husband. It ought not be done.



It’s not the point of Paul’s passage. Paul’s does not intend a point-for-point comparison. Of course my colleague is not talking about literal crucifixion, but rather a literal, continual, nothing-held-back sacrificial fury. The call to such radical giving understandably frightens, appalls and discourages the husband, while veiling his true, God-given role. This inevitably tends to dashed expectations (for the wife), anger, resentment (for the husband), and eventual disunity.

UNWITTING STEREOTYPE

At the Vancouver, Washington conference, my colleague laid out two columns on a white board, labeling them “Christ” and “Ecclesia.” Here is how it looked:

<u>CHRIST</u>	<u>ECCLESIA</u>
The Savior	The Sinner
The Success-er	The Failer
The Lover	The Beneficiary
The Embracer	The Resistant
The Steadfast	The Inconsistent

My colleague pointed to the board and said, concerning the respective roles of husbands and wives: “All you need to know is who Christ is, and all you need to know is who the ecclesia is ... this is a picture of husbands and wives.”

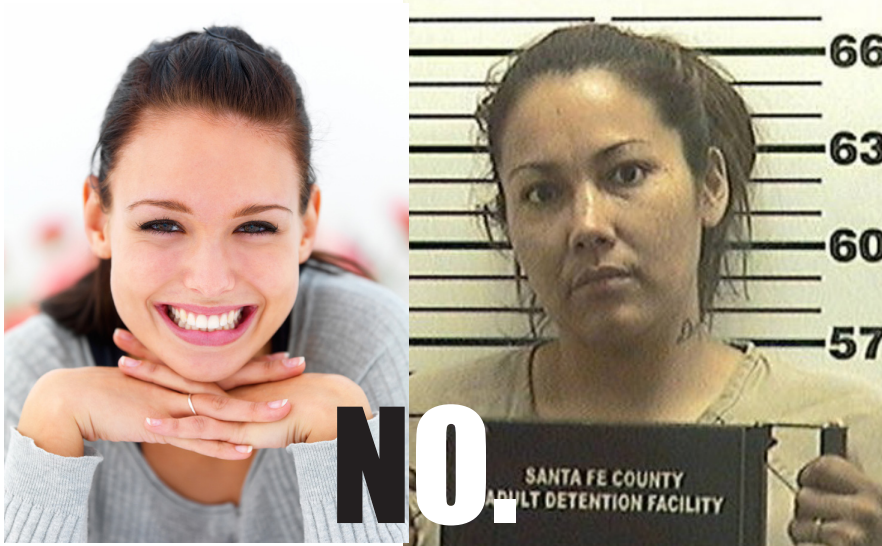
In other words, husbands save, wives sin; husbands succeed, wives fail; husbands love; wives passively suck it up; husbands embrace, wives push away; husbands are steadfast, wives are “all over the place.”

Addressing the wives in the audience, my colleague then said, “Wives, you just get to be who you already are! A part of the ecclesia! You get to be yourself!” To the husbands he said, “And we get to be the savior!”

I watched a couple of wives in the audience tightening their jaws and figeting with their fingers. Who could blame them? I saw one husband doing the same thing for a different reason. In one fell swoop, my colleague had unwittingly accomplished what I know would be the last thing he would ever want to accomplish: he stereotyped and demeaned women (no one should expect them to become anything but what they

are, that is, resistant and inconsistent failures), and set for men a Herculean task not given them by God. I did not speak to any of the congregation that day specifically about it, but I have to imagine that both wives and husbands left that meeting feeling like failures—the wives as passive failures, the husbands as failing God’s supposed call to empty themselves completely, surrender their lives in totality, and become small “s” saviors.

My colleague in no way intimated that all women were failures and all men were successes. I think he meant to say that, before entering matrimony, both men and women are all the things on the right side of the chart. After matrimony, however, God expects only one of the parties—the husband—to rise above “mere” body-of-Christ status and standards, and somehow pierce a veil into a transcendently new self. Wives, on the other hand, get to stay the same. It is probably even desirable for them to remain as they are (resistant, inconsistent, failures), so that they may fulfill their natural role in the savior/sinner arrangement. Otherwise, who would husbands have to save? How else could husbands suffer “as Christ suffered”? Apparently, “I do,” for a woman, means nothing more than the usual rut of sin, failure, resistance, and inconsistency. After all, she’s a woman and would be the most likely to remain camped on the bad side of the savior/sinner, steadfast/inconsistent dynamic. What about the man? Hang on to your testicles—if you have them.



JOINED HAPPILY TOGETHER?

What does “I do” mean for a man? While the wife continues to be herself, the husband must now transcend the common human experience to become something *other* than himself. Wives “get to be who they already are,” while husbands must now become a different thing altogether. Wives get to remain “a part of the ecclesia.” Husbands, who probably once imagined that membership in Christ’s body was hardship, suffering and sacrifice enough, now enter transcendent realms of this already difficult trilogy. Wives get to “be themselves.” For husbands, *that* common human luxury is over. From the wedding ceremony on (little do men realize that the altar is really a cross), husbands are expected, by God, to become like Jesus on the stake of death.

If any of this were true (don’t worry, it’s not) and were by some unfortunate means to become standard protocol, no man in his right mind would enter a marriage covenant. Rather than a covenant of shared happiness where a man and a woman look at one another, shrug, giggle, and stuff each other with cake, a giant iron curtain would—at the husband’s sublime utterance of “I do”—descend between them, not unlike the curtain rending Eve from Adam in the wake of the first woman’s sin. In that relatively happy scenario (happy compared to *this* scenario), Adam joined his wife in sin and the two became google-eyed, hapless explorers together through the darkness of the new world. If only it were that way at the modern “joining together.”

“Wives get to be themselves. For husbands, that common human luxury is over.”

In today’s marital arrangement (according to my colleague), the iron curtain of sin and separation falls hard and firmly between the so-called “recently joined,” so that now, while the wife camps miserably (or perhaps happily) in her default den of sin, failure, resistance and inconsistency, her husband miraculously transcends their once-common humanity, mounts a cross, promises to be everything for her (“Everything, my love!”) and gazes *across* the chasm between them, somehow *through* the iron curtain, and from this lofty yet blood-sotted hill, sur-

renders his very life and self to become “the all!” for the woman now happily dancing to “Love Shack.”

I see no way possible for this God-fearing man, having now assumed the most daunting role in his life—namely that of being Christ to a failure-entrenched sinner—to now dance happily with that same sinner to the sexually-charged strains of the B-52’s classic hit. How is it possible? Or is this why a staple of wedding receptions is alcohol? The booze is not primarily for the guests, but for the husband. I understand that now. But perhaps if the

husband is truly to become Christ-like he ought to instead suck vinegar from a sponge. Would that not be more appropriate? Then there is the wedding cake. How this man could possibly eat wedding cake (and play the little “stuff-it-in-the-face game” with his forever-inconsistent spouse) is beyond me. If this man appreciates anything of the solemnity and profundity of his new status, he ought to be kneeling at

a rock in an olive grove praying to his Father, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. I’m not talking about the cup of beer—for I need more of that—but of the marriage covenant.” But dancing to “Love Shack”? Stuffing battered and baked confections into his little failer’s mouth? I just can’t see it.

The mistake of my colleague lay in one word: “is,” when he says, “All you need to know is who Christ *is*, and all you need to know is who the ecclesia *is* ... this is a picture of husbands and wives.” Here is where my friend extends an inspired likeness beyond its intended bounds to reach an unintended, unwarranted conclusion. “Is” is

the two-letter word that inadvertently cursed people rather than blessed them at the Vancouver, Washington assembly.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

“All you need to know is who Christ *is*, and all you need to know is who the ecclesia *is*.”

In Ephesians 5:25-31, Paul is not comparing husbands to Christ, and neither is he comparing wives to the ecclesia. He is not doing this any more than I compared third-grade schoolgirls to Dick Butkus, and homework to football running backs. Paul is merely exhorting husbands to treat wives *in the manner in which* Christ treated the ecclesia, namely (verse 28): “Thus, the husbands also ought to be loving their own wives as their own bodies.” (I emphasized the importance of the word “thus” two weeks ago in my ZWTF titled, “Wife Loving”; see link below.) This context is limited to the body, that is, to the flesh. Verse 29, “For no one at any time hates his own flesh.” Verse 31, “The two shall be one flesh.” The context concerns a stronger vessel nurturing and cherishing—as opposed to destroying—a weaker vessel. If my colleague had said, “All you need to know, husbands, is how gently the mighty Christ treated the ecclesia,” then husbands would have left that meeting saying, “Gee, I can do that!” and the wives saying, “It’s about time someone in the ecclesia found Scriptural injunction against domestic abuse.”

Instead, the husbands got left feeling hopeless, and the wives stupid. They were each handed roles neither of them were meant to bear.

WE'RE ALL LOSERS

Both husbands and wives are members of the body of Christ “for we are members of His body” (Ephesians 5:30). As members of Christ’s body, both husbands and wives are, in their flesh, the “ignoble and the contemptible” things of the world chosen by God to disgrace the wise (1 Corinthians 1:28). I know of several cases where the gender characteristics stereotyped by my colleague’s chart are reversed: the husbands are the sinners, the failing-ones, the resistant and the inconsistent, and the wives are successful, loving, embracing and steadfast. I know many wives who are saving their marriages by loving husbands who don’t deserve it. Is this a reversal of “God’s way”? Or is God not even discussing this topic in Ephesians 5:25-31?

We could argue all day about which gender is morally or spiritually superior, or about who succeeds and who fails. To do so, however, would be burning unneces-

sary rubber on the wrong road. The chart drawn by my colleague ought not to exist. When writing Ephesians 5:25, Paul never envisioned such a literal, point-for-point comparison. To hold up Christ and the ecclesia as road maps or, worse, as roles of the respective genders, is to hijack to Cuba a plane bound for Boston. Leave the plane to its original port: Paul is simply exhorting husbands not to abuse their wives. All other comparisons are not only illegal and futile, but a practical reversal of God-ordained gender roles. As a side point, I personally believe the female to be the superior gender in all things but physical strength. Paul agrees at least in part here, for the abuse of superior strength is his only consideration.

GENDER ROLES IN THE MARRIAGE

According to the viewpoint of my colleague (I will quote him extensively later), the role of the husband in the marriage is to bleed and to break, to pour out his life, to give, give, give his last ounce of blood and sweat to his wife, even if it means setting aside his life’s work. The role of the wife, on the other hand, is to sit with her arms crossed and simply be who she is (“sinner”; “failer”; “beneficiary”; “resistant”; “inconsistent”), giving her husband the opportunity to save her. Tragically, this presentation is the precise opposite of the Scriptural roles of husbands and wives.

THE GENESIS ANSWER

The best place to look for the roles of husbands and wives is in the place in Scripture where God first mentions these. The premiere mention of any topic or word in Scripture is oftentimes definitive. Here is such a case. It is in Genesis, therefore, where we will find the roles of husbands and wives simply and plainly stated:

Men/Husbands: Genesis 2:15— “Then Yahweh Elohim took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to serve it and to keep it.”

Zender’s Patented Scripture Analysis®: God gave Adam a job to do: tend the garden.

Women/Wives: Genesis 2:18— “And Yahweh Elohim said: It is not good for the human to be alone by himself. I shall make for him a helper as his complement.”

Zender’s Patented Scripture Analysis®: Eve is supposed to help Adam do his job. She helps complete what he started.

From other parts of Scripture, I find that husbands are supposed to lead, and wives are supposed to follow that lead:

Men/Husbands: 1 Corinthians 9:5— “Have we no right at all to be leading about a sister as a wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?”

Zender’s Patented Scripture Analysis®: Husbands are to lead their wives about.

Women/Wives: Ephesians 5:22— “Let the wives be subject to their own husbands.”

Zender’s Patented Scripture Analysis®: Wives are to be subject to their own husbands.

Based on the above Scripture passage, I have drawn up my own chart of what a husband’s and wife’s roles out to be. This is my version of my colleague’s chart.

<u>HUSBAND</u>	<u>WIFE</u>
Works	Helps
Leads	Follows

You can immediately see the basic, drastic difference between my chart and that of my colleague. Rather than drawing upon a false analogy to define gender roles, I have drawn from other plainly-stated Scriptures addressing this specific theme. Rather than forcing an inspired analogy beyond its intended limits, I locate the one point of contact in that analogy explained by Paul (verse 28) and count the rest as dissimilarity. By discarding unintended comparisons, I have thus freed Ephesians 5:25-31 from a burden it was not meant to bear. The not-so-shocking result is that these two respective charts say wildly different things. The most blessed result is that wives are no longer demeaned or served-up unrealistic expectations, husbands are no longer illicitly challenged and discouraged, and harmony now at least has a chance to flourish between the sexes.

COMMENTARY UPON VIDEO QUOTES

As I present to you and comment upon actual quotes from the conference video, I will elaborate upon the respective Scriptural roles of husbands and wives in the marriage covenant:

“Our role in the gospel is to sin. He’s the role of the Savior. And this is a picture of husbands and wives.”

Our role as human recipients of the gospel of grace is to sin, yes (as opposed to Christ’s role, which is to save), but this missing of the mark belongs to both husbands and wives. To apply the sinning to wives and the saving to husbands is a missing of the mark in itself. If a husband needs any excuse to nurture a messiah complex, this would be it.



If a wife needs any excuse to lay stagnant in her spiritual growth, this would be it. As already mentioned, husbands and wives are both weak, ignoble, and stupid members of a called-out body. In fact, husbands are *so* stupid that Paul needs to tell them to treat their wives’ bodies as they treat their own. A rare, high spiritual calling for husbands? Nope. A simple exhortation to Neanderthals.

“Wives, you just get to be who you already are.”

This is not exactly a great way to inspire wives to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ Jesus. If a husband thinks that his greatest call is to save a sinner and embrace resistance, a sin-entrenched wife serves this agenda. My colleague would never overtly encourage a wife to remain stubborn and would no doubt insist, upon questioning, that embracing resistance would ideally lessen that resistance, but he did say in his address that “Those who have

wives who are easy-going and easy to be husbands to are at a disadvantage.” Since a difficult wife so greatly profits a man’s spiritual walk, from whence comes his motivation to alter her condition? Since an easy-going wife serves only to derail a man’s role as steadfast savior, what now happens to that role? (Or is a steadfast savior *not* a husband’s role?)



“Christ is the One who has success, the ecclesia is the failure ... and this is a picture of husbands and wives.”

Both husbands and wives, as common members of Christ’s body, are failures. Each gender in the body of Christ enjoys equal opportunity to help the other. Husbands have never cornered the market on success, and neither are wives the poster-children for failure. Consider Romans 15:1-2—

Now we, the able, ought to be bearing the infirmities of the impotent, and not to be pleasing ourselves. Let each of us please his associate, for his good, toward his edification.

When Paul says, “we, the able,” he is not talking to husbands. This exhortation is gender-neutral. Any faith-enhanced member of Christ’s body ought to bear the infirmities of the weaker member. A strong husband ought to exercise patience with a weak wife, yes; but it also works the other way around. When Paul says, “Let us each please our associate,” he exhorts wives as well as husbands. Paul would never tell wives, “You’re a type of the ecclesia, so just sit by and be passively pleased. You get to be yourself.” Neither would he ever say to these wives, “Don’t be too concerned about working for the edification of your husband; it’s his role to edify *you*. Just be who you already are: a resistant, inconsistent sinner.”

“Husbands, we have the role of Christ. And we get to be the Savior.”

Husbands, concerning marriage, we have the role of Christ only in the manner in which Christ nourished rather than destroyed a weaker vessel. In this way only are we saviors. We save our wives by not hurting them. We save them by feeding them, clothing them, housing them and treating them gently. Most husbands can do this. Other than this, we’re in the same boat with them in the sin/fail/resistant/inconsistent department. Even if you are morally superior to your wife, do not lord it over her. Do not unintentionally belittle and demean her by portraying yourself as her messiah. She will only resent it and will probably think of new ways to sin against you.

“My view is that since I am a husband, that that’s my first and primary role and responsibility. And anything in addition to that, is just that.”

I appreciate any man’s view. Certainly a husband is to care for his own, and if he does not do so then, according to Paul, he is worse than an infidel. But if the order of things in Eden is a pattern of a husband’s and wife’s respective roles (as I believe it is), then working becomes a man’s primary role. It is the wife who is the addition, not a man’s work.

Which came first with Adam, his work or his wife? His work. As already discussed, God told Adam in Genesis 2:15 to tend the garden. Not until Genesis 2:18 does Eve come along as his helper. You may say, “But Martin, how could Adam’s husbandly duties possibly take precedence when Eve had yet to be created?” Are you telling me that, if Adam and Eve have been created simultaneously, then God would have said, “Adam, love your wife first. And if you have any time or energy left, tend the garden.” What is the difference between Adam having one person to feed (himself), and two? Both people need to eat. Adam loves and cares for himself *by* tending the garden. He loves and cares for his wife *by* sowing and reaping tomatoes and watermelons.

I fail to appreciate the dichotomy forwarded by my colleague. Why the “either/or” proposition? What man sits around doting over his wife until the two starve? Furthermore, why would a man tending to his work be, by default, neglecting his wife? Working *is* caring for her. Only the rare exception/provision in Israel under the Mosaic law exempted a husband from work. Deuteronomy 24:5—

When a man takes a new wife, he shall neither go forth with the militia host, nor shall any mat-

ter of duty pass on to him. He shall be exempt for his house one year, and he will rejoice with his wife whom he has taken.

What a wonderful provision of God. What a great start for a married couple. I'm assuming that, during this year of zero production, the extended family provided financially for the newleyweds. The fact that this period was to last a mere 365 days out of a lifetime, however, says more to me concerning the status-quo roles of husbands and wives than does the provision itself.

“Maybe you need to study, but your wife needs your time. Lay down your Bible and go love your wife, if it takes every last drop of blood and energy you have.”

Again, why the dichotomy? If my wife is choking on a hot dog then, yes, I'll run to her. If she's in the bedroom crying, then certainly I'll lay down my Greek concordance and go see what's the matter. I'm just not sure about this “every last drop of blood and energy you have” bit. Isn't blood and energy/sweat supposed to go toward my work? God told Adam in Genesis 3:19, “By the sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread.” I have never seen sweat mentioned in conjunction with loving a wife.

It so happens that studying my Bible *is* my work. What if a factory guy's wife calls him at work and says she needs the carrots peeled for dinner? Or her neck feels stiff and she needs a neckrub? Does he abandon his shift and rush home to her? “I'll fire you if you do!” his boss says, but the husband leaves anyway because his last drops of sweat and blood belong to his wife, not his boss. Some wives sense a husband's misplaced “wife first” disposition and demand *all* of his time. What about this? Since he is Christ and she is the ecclesia, shouldn't he acquiesce? What would Jesus do? If the husband has any sweat and blood left, does he not owe it to her, since she represents the poor ecclesia? According to the strange new teaching, he does. But if he exhausts his blood, he's dead. What good is a dead savior who has no promise of a three-day-only hadean stint? Or is this to be considered the ultimate husbandly sacrifice?

God intends for husbands to “tend a garden” first. For companionship and help, He provides a wife. This is simple and ultimately satisfies the God-given nature of the respective genders. The Scriptural mandate is that a man sweat and bleed for his work, and that a wife



sweat and bleed for him. Wives, you know this: childbirth; childrearing; homemaking; for the love of God, you *literally* bleed for us every thirty days or so—who is sweating and bleeding for whom here? You sweat and bleed daily for your husband and family. No one does it better. But your men are sweating and “bleeding” every day for both of you, and for the world-at-large. I speak of the “garden” given your husband by God to tend. A husband's work in and for this world is, by extension, for his wife—and so is her help; by helping him, she helps herself. She not only helps herself, but the world. It is generally men, not women, who have built cities, hospitals, roads, airplanes, automobiles, houses, apartment buildings and the Internet; it is primarily men who have defended us from mortal harm and proclaimed to the world the gospel of Christ Jesus. Generally, men cut down the trees, pour the concrete and refine the oil that provide our basic living necessities. Those who herald the true gospel provide peace and grace to those prepared by God to hear it. But no man does anything as well as he can without the aid and assistance of an able wife.

In all of this, I vehemently oppose the husband/wife roles proposed by my colleague. The roles set forth by directly-announced Scripture trump whatever proposed roles ride the wake of a false analogy. Truth will shine clear as we look into the Proverbs 31 wife. But first, I am happy to report that the apostle Peter—who according to Scripture was married; see Matthew 8:14 and 1 Corinthians 9:5—refused to subscribe to any unscriptural philosophy. Peter’s wife is never named, but I am calling her “Petra.” The following three scenarios go from “worst” to “best,” the first scenario bowing to the false analogy, the last scenario to God’s inspired injunction for husbands and wives:

Scenario 1: WORST CASE (Peter gives every last drop of blood and energy to his wife.)

PETER: Well, we’ve got a big meeting in the Upper Room in 15 minutes. I’ll be seeing you.

PETRA: You’ll be “seeing me?” What about the garage door you promised to fix?

PETER: What? Oh. I’ll fix it later, Petra. I’ve really got to be at this meeting.

PETRA: Do you still love me?

PETER: Huh?

PETRA: I don’t think you love me anymore.

PETER: Of course I do. Can we talk about this later?

PETRA: If you loved me, you’d fix the garage door.

PETER: Baby, I’ll fix it tomorrow. I’ve really got to go.

PETRA: What could be more important than my needs?

PETER: Something big is going to happen in the Upper Room.

PETRA: What could be bigger than loving your wife?

PETER: Um—an historic descent of the holy spirit?

PETRA: I think you love your work more than you love me!

PETER: You’re a *very* close second.

PETRA: Peter!

PETER: Wait! Listen! Is that a wind blowing?

PETRA: Stop looking out the window, Peter. I’m over *here*.

PETER: Yeah, but I think God is over *there*.

PETRA: I’ve had enough of this. Your first line of ministry is *me*.

PETER: (still looking out window) Do you have a verse for that?

PETRA: You have a choice to make, mister. It’s either me or the Upper Room.

PETER: (staring at his wife) Is this a joke?

PETRA: Hardly. I am your primary responsibility.

This Upper Room thing is an *addition*.

PETER: Actually *you’re* the addition, but ...

PETRA: Nice try, Rock. Are you a godly husband, or aren’t you?

PETER: There’s a glow coming from the Upper Room!

PETRA: Are you a *true* type of Christ, or aren’t you?

PETER: Oh, no! Andrew is in the city square reading *The Gettysburg Address*. Idiot!

PETRA: Great. Now let’s have that sweat and energy over *here*, shall we?

PETER: (resigned) Okay. Forget it. It’s over. It’s lost. Where’s the screwdriver?

PETRA: That’s better. You’re doing the right thing, and Jesus will reward you for it.

* * *

Scenario 2: BETTER CASE (Peter recognizes his first line of ministry in spite of Petra.)

PETER: Well, we’ve got a big meeting in the Upper Room in 15 minutes. I’ll be seeing you.

PETRA: You’ll be “seeing me?” What about the garage door you promised to fix?

PETER: What? Oh. I’ll fix it later, Petra. Gotta go!

PETRA: I’m going to divorce you!

PETER: You will be missed.

* * *

Scenario 3: BEST CASE (Petra recognizes her husband’s priorities and serves them, and him.)

PETRA: Rock, have you looked at the time?

PETER: Oh, my gosh! I’m supposed to be at the Upper Room in 15 minutes.

PETRA: I’ve got your lunch packed at the door. Now *get*.

PETER: (slapping his head) Oh, crap! I promised to fix the garage door today.

PETRA: Are you out of your mind? You can fix it tomorrow. Or the day after. Who cares?

PETER: I love you, Baby.

PETRA: Yeah, yeah. Oh, here! Don’t forget your Scriptures, for Christ’s sake.

PETER: Where would I be without you?

PETRA: In hades. Now get the hell out of here, or Andrew is going to do something stupid.

* * *



“Those who have wives who are easy-going and easy to be husbands to are at a disadvantage.”

This strange saying serves only to provide a necessary rationalization to husbands with difficult wives. There is no doubt that difficult people of any ilk or office provide us with opportunities to show grace and love. I think this is what my colleague is *trying* to say. But unfortunately, what he *does* say is, “Wives, you just get to be who you already are,” and “Husbands, we have the role of Christ. And we get to be savior.” In the misguided stereotype, wives are practically encouraged to remain the victims of their inherent spiritual inertia, while husbands are challenged to surrender every drop of blood and energy to toward their wives, even at the expense of “tending their garden,” if necessary. What will follow in the wake of such stereotypes? Spoiled, crippled wives and misdirected, crippled husbands.

Just hand out crutches to everybody.

All this trouble from a false analogy. The false analogy has turned reality on its head. In Scripture, it is wives who diligently work and sweat for their husbands and families, while husbands sweat primarily (not secondarily) at their God-given work.

Toward this end, I cite Proverbs 31:10-31. Here is how it begins:

A wife of ability, who can find?
Any man finding her is at great disadvantage.
She requites him with good and not evil,
Thus totally screwing up
His role as “suffering savior.”
Why can’t she just sit still and be
Her end of the “savior/sinner” dynamic?

No, not really. Here is how the Proverb really reads:

A wife of ability, who can find?
Far more than rubies is her worth.
Her spouse’s heart understanding puts trust in her,
So that he lacks not proceeds.
She requites him with good and not evil
All the days of her life.
She seeks after wool and flax
And works them according to the delight of her palms.
She is like the ships of a merchant;
She brings her bread from afar.
She rises while it is still night
And provides viands for her household
And dole for her maidens.
She plans for a field and procures it;
From the fruit of her palms she plants a vineyard.
She girds her waist with strength,
And she makes her arms resolute.
She inspects to see that her merchandise is good;
Her lamp is not quenched at night.
She puts forth her hands on the distaff,
And her palms hold firm to the spindle.
She spreads out her palm to the humble
And puts forth her hands to the needy.
She does not fear the snow for her household,
For all in her household are clothed with double garments.
She makes decorative covers for herself;
Her clothing is cambric and purple.
Her spouse is acknowledged in the gateways,
When he sits with the elders of the land.
She makes shirts and sells them,
And she produces girdles for the trafficker.
Strength and honor are her clothing,
And she can make sport of the days hereafter.
She opens her mouth with wisdom,
And the law of benignity is on her tongue.
She watches over the affairs of her household



And does not eat the bread of slothfulness.
 Her sons arise and call her happy;
 Her spouse also praises her, saying:
 Many daughters do ably,
 Yet you ascend over them all.
 Grace may be false and loveliness transitory,
 But the woman fearful of Yahweh, she shall be praised.
 Give honor to her for the fruit of her hands,
 And let them praise her in the gateways for her deeds.

The woman described here is far from the passive, sinning, failing, resistant and inconsistent wife who attains to nothing but foil-hood for her “savior” husband.

I cite here the verbs credited to the Proverbs wife, and then contrast them with those native to the husband.

WIFE

seeks (vs. 13), works (13), brings (14), rises (15), provides (15), plans (16), girds (17), makes (17), inspects (18), puts forth (19), spreads (20), produces (24), watches (27).

HUSBAND

sits (23)

Many wives among my readers are thinking to themselves, *yes; that's about right*. In quick defense of the husband, he is not sitting on a La-Z-Boy recliner. “Her spouse is acknowledged in the gateways, when he sits with the elders of the land” (Proverbs. 31:23). The husband occupies an esteemed place in the community. How did he get there? Her.

The last verse of this chapter, verse 31, reads: “Give

honor to her for the fruit of her hands, and let them praise her in the gateways for her deeds.”

In the very same place where her husband sits, the wife is honored for the fruit of her hands and is praised for her deeds. My conclusion: He is the fruit of her hands; he is one of her deeds. He is glorified in the gates because of her. Because of the many verbs she executes on his behalf, *he* is acknowledged. His glory is not his own; she fostered and nourished it.

“Her spouse’s heart puts trust in her, so that he lacks no proceeds” (vs. 11). The husband’s proceeds are of her. In a sense, she *is* the proceeds. His glory results from what she has accomplished. *She* is his glory (1 Corinthians 11:7-8).

“She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household.” Women possess an endurance men don’t have. The Proverbs 31 woman multi-tasks, even before the sun. Men cannot successfully do this. Men can do only one thing well at a time; they can do two or three things badly. Males lack glory. They cannot provide for themselves a favorable opinion. This glory, this favorable opinion, is provided for them by the female. The female is their glory (1 Corinthians 11:7-8).

A male without a female rarely realizes his potential.

“She spreads out her palm to the humbled and puts forth her hands to the needy” (vs. 20). The most humble and needy among us are babies and children. Women not only further the race, they feed it, cloth it, and send it to school. Then they spread out their palms to other humbled and needy people, such as the sick and elderly. More women are nurses than men. Why? Women sim-

ply care more about sick people. Women fix the people men hurt. Women, not men, send cards to the ailing. They send cards to the afflicted, and to those deserving praise. They send cards to sick people, to the wedded, to the graduated, to anniversary people, and to the families of the dead. Were it not for women, Hallmark would be out of business by the end of the month. Men, on the other hand, can barely remember their own wife's birthday or their wedding anniversary.

"She makes decorative covers for herself; her clothing is cambric and purple" (vs. 22).

The only other reference to "decorative covers" in Scripture is Proverbs 7:16-17. The seductress says to her suitor, "I have decorated my divan with decorative covers, with bedspreads of Egyptian yarn. I have wafted my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon." Whatever women touch, they beautify. If something is decorated, a female did it. Wherever pleasant odors waft, do not seek the responsible male. You will not find him. He does not exist.

Who is the Christ figure here, and who is the ecclesia? Which party is portrayed as saving, succeeding, loving, embracing and remaining steadfast? Is it not the wife? Which party is portrayed as sucking up the benefits? Is it not the husband? If we *had* to entertain a point-by-point analogy between Christ and the ecclesia, the wife occupies the Christ column hands-down. This is because she is designed this way by God to be a help to her husband. If Eve is the designated helper, then who needs the help?

And this would be disadvantageous to husbands—*how?*

Another man twisting the truth about women once wrote me:

Men are less emotional and can decide things more rationally. Just as women can be emotional and fickle (especially once a month), thus also mankind is fickle, contradictory, and needs God to be patient with him. In other words, a woman's more emotional nature pictures the fickleness of mankind.

I replied:

The definition of fickle is, "not constant or loyal in affection." Men are far guiltier of this than women. In Scripture, men are overwhelmingly preferred by God as examples of disloyalty: Cain, Jacob, the sons of Israel, Laban, David, Solomon, Jonah, the clergy of our Lord's day, and so on. With few exceptions, women are well presented in God's Word: Rebecca, Ruth, Esther, Deborah, the Queen of Sheba, Mary, Martha,

Lydia, Priscilla. Men beat Christ; women soothed Him. *Thank you, Lord, for the rational, emotionally stable men who crucified our Lord and stoned all the prophets.*

What women are once a month, men are 24/7.

Woman is God's picture of why humanity needs God's patience? Not true. God's picture for that is another male: the apostle Paul. Paul writes concerning himself: "But therefore was I shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ should be displaying all His patience, for a pattern of those who are about to be believing on Him for life eonian" (1 Timothy 1:16).

"[Comparing husbands to wives] this is 'give, give, give, give, give, give and receive, receive, receive, receive, receive, receive.'"

As we have just seen from Proverbs 31, the husband/wife dynamic is indeed a "give, give, give"/"receive, receive, receive" proposition, but the giving comes for the most part from the wife, with the husband on the receiving end of wifely ministering. This is not to say, of course, that husbands do not give to their wives. They do. But wives give out of proportion. Why is the wife so generous? She can't help herself. God made her this way. She's the one who keeps her husband going. It's not that things are backwards and that we need to "fix this screwed-up mess of wives giving so much." This is the divine design. Without a wife's care, most men wither and die. Or perish from discouragement. Certainly, men could never give the

"If Eve is the designated helper, then who needs the help?"



necessary time and energy to their God-given work without the help of wives. Many men, however, have been kept from doing it by wives who are burdens rather than helps. In either case, the wife's role is pivotal.

Again I say: if woman is man's helper, who needs the help? Woman alone in Eden would apparently not have needed it. Her need of a man comes via the curse, whereas man—post Genesis 2:21—needs woman inherently. Let's probe this further:

And to the woman He said: 'I shall increase, yea increase your grief and the groanings of your pregnancy. In grief shall you bear children; yet by your husband is your restoration and he shall rule over you.'

—Genesis 3:16, *Concordant Version of the Old Testament*

The wording of this passage suggests that a husband rescues his wife from the curse (he restores her), and that the wife pays for the favor by becoming subservient. As this is misleading, let's look deeper.

In the Concordant Version, there is a footnote at the word "restoration." The footnote reads: "*Hb* impulse." This means that the Hebrew word here, *teshuqah*, means "impulse," not restoration. Why the Concordant Version put "impulse" in the footnote and not in the text, I don't know. Additionally, where the word "over" appears, as in, "he shall rule over you," there is a superscript "i," like this: ⁱover. This means that the word in the original Hebrew is "in," not over. Again, why the Concordant Version does not use "in" in the text—is curious to me. But at least the right words are noted.

Another literal translation of the Hebrew scriptures, the Dabhar Translation, imports these elements into the text itself. Here is the passage from the Dabhar Translation:

Unto the woman He spoke: 'To increase I shall increase your sadness and your pregnancy; in sadness you will bear sons, and unto your man will be your striving, but he, he will rule within you.'

Notice that, for the Hebrew *teshuqah*, the Dabhar Translation has "striving." This is much closer to "impulse" than the Concordant, "restoration." Additionally, there is a footnote at the word "within." The footnote says, "the heart of." Furthermore, where the word "but" appears, as in "but he, he will rule within you," is a superscript "a," like this, ^abut. This means that the word in the

original Hebrew is "and," not but. What does all this mean? The following:

Unto the woman He spoke: 'To increase I shall increase your sadness and your pregnancy; in sadness you will bear sons, *and unto your man will be your impulse and striving, and he, he will rule in your heart.*'

And so, it is not that Adam becomes Eve's restoration. Rather, he becomes her undertaking. It is a new-found void within her—post-curse—that makes her care about Adam in a measure previously unknown.



Adam's deficiencies—greater than hers—now incline her ("impulse"; "striving") toward his aid. Her heart now tells her that, without her care, this man dies. Remarkably, modern scientific data confirms this. In the longevity department, marriage benefits men more than women, whereas women outlive men no matter their marital status.

Janelle Miles, National Medical Correspondent in Brisbane, Australia, reporting in 2005 for the AAP Newswire, writes:

Marriage may add almost a year to a man's life, but it does little to boost the lifespan of women, Australian researchers have found. A study of about 3,000 elderly men and women since 1988 found married men lived on average 11 months longer than their single counterparts. But marital status for women made no significant difference to longevity.

In "Journal of Marriage and the Family," Lauren Wispe of the University of Oklahoma writes:

There is considerable evidence that marriage is positively correlated with longevity for both men and women, although the benefits of marriage favor men more than women. While matrimony appears to be particularly benevolent to men, the final arbiter, biology, still favors women over men in general mortality rates.

Even after the curse of Eden, men need women more than women need men.

Speaking of general mortality rates, by the age of 100, women outnumber men 8 to 1.

"And he shall rule over you." This mistranslation has wreaked immeasurable societal havoc. No wonder men lord it over women, and husbands over wives; they imagine God, in Eden, decreed it. What a difference between "he shall rule over you" and "he shall rule *in* you," that is, in your heart. Rather than a warning to women and a command to men, this verse becomes a credit to women and a blessing to men. His welfare is now the burden of her heart. No one spills more blood and sweat than she.

"We [husbands] give ourselves away."

Yes—to our work. It is a general truth that we are to be deeming one another superior to one's self (Philippians 2:3), but this is not a specific command given to husbands *rather* than to wives, but to every member of Christ's body, male or female.

"[Christ] went to Calvary and gave up His life. To be a husband, we have to give up our lives."

This is what it takes to *be* a husband? To give up our lives? Not true. All it takes is a few well-spoken words and vanilla cake. We could certainly give up our lives

to our wives if we wanted to, but there is a big difference between "wanting to" and "having to" via a supposedly divine necessity built upon a false analogy. To give up one's life for another is hardly gender-specific. "Greater love than this has no one, that anyone may be laying down his soul for his friends" (John 15:13) applies to wives as well as to husbands. Many wives die in childbirth for the sake of their husbands and families. Many wives have donated organs to save their husbands' lives. Wives are expected only to passively absorb a husband's sacrificial giving? Absurd. Why rob wives of superior blessing, for is it not more blessed to give than to receive? (Acts 20:35). As I said two weeks ago in my article "Wife Loving," the exhortation to "Love your associate as yourself (Romans 13:9)" is gender-neutral or, better to say, gender-inclusive. Husbands are *specifically* told to do it in Ephesians 5:25 because they're sometimes too stupid to think of it themselves.

"Our lives for our wives is one little cut of ourselves at a time, maybe until it's all gone."

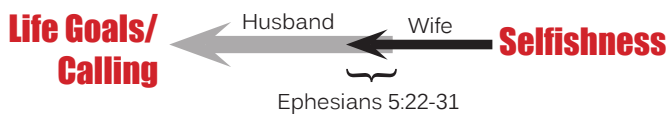
As I wrote two weeks ago, nowhere is anyone in Scripture commanded to give until there's nothing left of ourselves. We are "to love our associate *as* ourselves." No one who loves him or herself gives everything away until there

"The exhortation to love your associate as yourself is gender-inclusive."



is nothing left. If there is nothing left, how can a person continue to be a help? I've shared with you before the airliner oxygen mask example. While you're sitting on a jet waiting for takeoff, the flight attendant tells you that, in case of a drop in cabin pressure, oxygen masks will fall from an overhead storage area. The instruction at this point is always: "Secure your own mask before helping a child." *What?* Isn't that selfish? Isn't this a deplorable "me first!" attitude? Not at all. Unless *you're* conscious, how can you help a weaker one? The ability to care for either the mental or emotional health of another requires one's own emotional and mental health. Aside from voluntarily dying for someone, giving oneself away "maybe until it's all gone" smacks of a personality disorder known as "co-dependence," where one's own perceived value depends on giving "maybe until it's all gone" to another. Certainly, Paul did not have this in mind when he wrote, "Husbands, love your wives," or even, "be deeming one another superior to one's self" (Philippians 2:3).

TWO COURSES

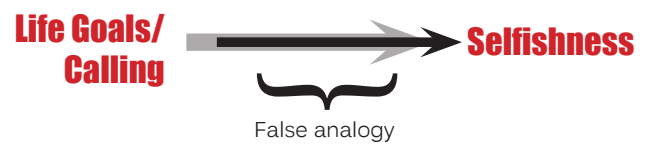


The above example illustrates a healthy, Scriptural design for marriage. The husband "tends the garden" given him by God, and the wife helps him. Husband and wife head in the same direction. Where the husband and wife arrows overlap is where God instructs them on how to get along and treat one another. Even though the coital union makes them metaphorically "one flesh," they are still two very different individuals, as illustrated by the considerable parts of the arrows that do not overlap. Each has his and her own walk with God.

Such an arrangement opposes selfishness as each party serves a good greater than him/herself: the husband serves his God-given calling, the wife serves her husband. What if the wife has a different calling? What if he is a painter, while she a hairdresser? In this case, the "Life's Goals/Calling" becomes a general goal rather than a specific occupation, for example, the couple decides to "build a house out west," or "adopt children," or "become politically active in their community." While the husband naturally tends to set and steer the vision for his family, most decisions are reached by consensus. Should there be an impasse, the wife is to yield. This does not speak to any inherent inferiority on the part of the wife, but is simply an order

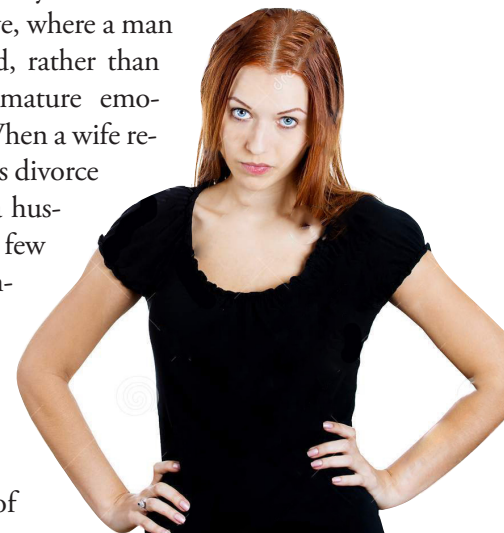
of authority set by God ("let the wives be subject to their own husbands"—Ephesians 5:22) for the solving of impasses.

Never minding modern societal trends, the above arrangement satisfies both husbands and wives. God has implanted husbands with a deep need to fight for causes and/or change the world, and women with a similarly deep need to care for people, which would of course include her husband. Certainly women can also fight for causes—and many have—though such women are probably better off remaining single, that is, unless their cause is the same as their husband's.



The example above illustrates a marital experiment based on a false analogy drawn from Ephesians 5:25-27. In this illustration, the wife becomes content to play her role in the Christ/Sinner analogy and thus remains resistant, inconsistent, and a failure. The husband, thinking that his wife is his "primary role and responsibility" even if it takes "every last drop of blood and energy" he has, leaves his "Life's Goals/Calling" to smother his wife (thus the overlapping arrows) with "love," possibly (perhaps even ideally) until he dies. This becomes a disastrous course that not only cripples progress upon the "Life's Goals/Calling" road, but personal progress as well.

While the wife's direction in this illustration is clearly selfish, it is not immediately evident that the husband's is as well. The harder course for any husband (assuming that husband to be a spiritual leader) is to lead his wife and bring her to maturity. This often-times calls for tough love, where a man will stay his course and, rather than indulging a wife's immature emotions, call her to him. When a wife refuses to go and threatens divorce rather than submit to a husband's leadership, very few husbands have the stomach or nerve to hold their ground. Thus, the husband caves to his wife's whims. He may call it "love," but it is in fact the easier of



two paths. This is why I call it ultimately selfish. The husband's only thought now is for the preservation of his own soul and/or reputation.

WIVES WITH STUBBORN HUSBANDS

Many wives may be saying, "What about us? We have unbelieving husbands who have no idea what you're talking about and don't want to know. What are we supposed to do?" Submit to your husband's goals for your marriage. You can respect him without agreeing with him. "Submission" is not a command for you to sell your soul to the devil. If your husband says, "Give up your faith," tell him, "no." If your husband is a Buddhist and demands (hopefully he merely requests) that you go to the temple with him, maybe try it a couple times. It may be relaxing. Incense might be just the thing for you. If it disturbs your spirit, tell him you can't go anymore but that you will submit yourself to his desire to attend, even though you wish he wouldn't.

You can still live out the first illustration by helping your husband to reach his goals. Notice the small

"You can follow your own pursuits even while helping your husband."



overlap of the two arrows. This is good news for you. You are your own person. Thus, you can follow your own pursuits even while helping your husband. Join clubs. Get girlfriends. Start a hobby. Continue to grow spiritually by visiting worthy Internet sites. This is not selfishness as long as you're helping your husband and considering his needs. Win him to Christ by your behavior. Send him a link to spiritual material once in a while, just to see what happens.

Never allow your husband to abuse you. Physical or emotional abuse annuls the marriage covenant and gives you Scriptural recourse for getting out. Even if your husband is not a believer, he may still be an insistent, consistent leader who loves you. Insistent, consistent leading is not emotional abuse.

"AS THOUGH NOT HAVING THEM"

Finally, the apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7:29—

Now this I am averring, brethren, the era is limited; that, furthermore, those also having wives may be as not having them.

How is this exhortation from our apostle to be reconciled with my colleague's exhortation to husbands to "give up [their] lives until they're all gone" to their wives?

- A. Pretend like you don't even have wives.
- B. Bleed and sweat for your wives until you die.

These two exhortations cannot be reconciled. There is no correspondence here, but rather stark disconnect. In two weeks, I hope to write extensively on this section of 1 Corinthians 7:29, not for the sake of husbands and wives only, but for any of us feeling overwhelmed by commitments and life's killing details. While it is true that husbands and wives cannot be completely undistracted for the Lord due to their mutual commitment (1 Corinthians 7:32-34), Paul sets forth in verse 29 of this chapter a unique way for even those bound by such a commitment to feel as free and peaceful as those freed of it.

In two weeks, then: "The Era is Limited."

Next week: "Death of the Old Humanity, Part 2."

Or so I suppose. If the snatching away wants to happen before then, it's fine with me. —MZ