Gender Roles and Responsibilities in Marriage as Christ’s Image Bearers

* Both man and woman were created in God’s Image and therefore both men and women have Dignity and Design (both in Connection and Reflection).[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Marriage was created by God and designed to be a blessing in this relationship to each other (biological male and biological female). They were to reflect some of God’s attributes to each other (e.g., love, goodness, kindness, etc.).
* In order for married couples to glorify God in this world and image Christ, reflecting Him more and more, they must be committed to having the following basis for their marriage.

1. The Preeminence of Christ

To build their marriage upon a biblical basis, couples must be committed to the preeminence of Christ in their lives and marriage. Their constant focus should be – we have died with Christ (to self and sin) and now we live “in Christ” to follow and serve Him (Rom 6).

1. Biblical commands and principles
2. Eph 1: 1-11 – Our Salvation is ultimately for God’s glory (1 Cor 10:31)
3. Col. 1:18—In all things Christ has the preeminence (incl. marriage).
4. Matt. 6:33—Even in marriage, we are to seek first the kingdom of God.
5. 2 Cor 5:9; 11:3 – Our greatest desire is to please Christ, and keep our sincere and pure devotion to Him alone.
6. Luke 14:25-35 – Jesus has to be our first love above every other love
7. Etc.
8. Ways to make God preeminent
9. Reflect on the Gospel of Jesus Christ on a daily basis (both the Union and Communion aspects)
10. Maintain all the spiritual disciplines as we look to Christ
11. Love Christ's church together – make ministry something you do together (not his and hers if possible)
12. Eliminate (mortify) things that dishonor God and pursue the righteous alternatives instead (vivify) (Col. 3:5–9)
13. Make personal holiness, not happiness and self-pleasure, the central theme in how you make decisions
14. Possibly meet with a few other godly couples who are pursuing the same goal
15. Etc.
16. The Purposes of Marriage

To build their marriage upon a biblical basis, a couple must be committed to fulfill God’s purposes for marriage. These biblical purposes are all under the ultimate goal of glorifying God and keeping Jesus Preeminent.

* + 1. Companionship (Gen. 2:18a; Prov. 2:17; 1 Pet. 3:7)
    2. Assistance (Gen. 2:15, 18; cf. Psalm 70:1 “helper”)
    3. Characterization of God's relationship to His people and Christ's relationship to His church (Eph. 5:22–32)
    4. Sexual Union (Gen. 1:27-28a; 2:24c; 1 Cor. 7:3-5; Heb. 13:4)
    5. Ministry/Fruit(Eph. 4:12; 2 Pt. 1:8 – same as one who is single – to live for and serve Jesus for the Glory of God)

1. The Roles and Responsibilities of Husbands and Wives as image bearers[[2]](#footnote-2)

* “Only through love will order be embraced but only through order will love be expressed.”[[3]](#footnote-3)
  + 1. Husbands, as an image bearer, should be reflecting God’s glory in these ways:[[4]](#footnote-4)
       - 1. Reflecting Christ’s glory when husbands are SACRIFICAL **LOVERS** (Eph 5:1-2, 25-33)

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her”

Love Defined[[5]](#footnote-5)

Christlike love: a selfless and enduring commitment of the redeemed heart (by faith in Christ) to intentionally care for and truly benefit the true needs of another person by righteous, truthful, and compassionate thoughts, words and sacrificial actions empowered by the Holy Spirit and for the glory of God.

Love Described (as Christ loved the church)

1. Initiatory

“We love, because He first loved us.” *1 John 4:19*

Sacrificial

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” *Eph. 5:25*

Humble

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of your regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” *Phil. 2:3–4*

Volitional

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.” *John 15:16*

Contra-conditional

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” *Rom. 5:8*

Forgiving

“Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” *Col. 3:13*

Practical

“Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.” *1 John 3:18*

* + - * 1. Reflecting Christ’s glory when husbands are SERVANT-**LEADERS** (Eph 5:21-33; 1 Cor 11:3,9,11)

“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God…” 1 Cor 11:3

What Godly Leadership is Not

1. A dictatorship – Matt. 20:25
2. Making all the decisions – Gen 2:18
3. Following your wife

1 Cor. 11:3,7-9—“But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.”

Eph. 5:23—God did not intend for the husband to follow his wife's lead but vice-versa.

What Godly Leadership Is

“Biblical headship is a divine calling of a husband to take primary responsibility for Christ-like servant leadership, protection, and provision in the home.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

* + - * 1. Reflecting Christ’s glory when husbands are PATIENT **LONGSUFFERERS,** not harsh but gentle Col 3:19)

“Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”

* + - * 1. Reflecting Christ’s glory when husbands are HUMBLE, RESPECTFUL **LEARNERS** (1 Pt 3:7)

“You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” *1 Pet. 3:7*

* + 1. Wives, as an image bearer, should be reflecting God’s glory in these ways:
       - 1. Reflecting Christ’s glory when wives are SUBMISSIVELY **HEEDING** their husband’s leadership in non-sinful requests (Eph 5:1-2; Titus 2:4-5)
         2. Reflecting Christ’s glory when wives are REVERENTIALY **HONORING** their husbands (lit “fear” – not slavish but filial, Eph 5:22-24,33; 1 Cor. 11:3)
         3. Reflecting Christ’s glory when wives are FUNCTIONAL **HelpERS** to their husbands (Gen 2:18-24; Prov. 31:10-31; 1 Cor. 11:9)
         4. Reflecting Christ’s glory when wives are MAINTAINING a **HOME- Attentiveness** (Prov 31:10-31; Eph 5:1-2; Titus 2:4-5)

‘In-Home’ ministry

‘Outside –the-home’ ministry

1. John Kilner, Dignity and Destiny. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Grand Design, Owen Strachan & Gavin Peacock, 26. “Complementarity – The sexes are complementary – that is, they are different but fit together,” 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. These roles and responsibilities are only possible through the power and control of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. David Powlison offers an excellent critique of Chapman’s book, Love Languages, entitled, “Love speaks many languages fluently,” <https://www.ccef.org/jbc_article/love-speaks-many-languages-fluently/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. John Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaten: Crossway Books, 1991), 52-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)