

The Concept of Marriage in the Epistle to the Church at Ephesus

The gender roles described in the New Testament are for Christians, who respond to these roles by faith. Dictating gender roles to non-Christians would be as inappropriate as enforcing baptism or the Lord's Supper for unbelievers. These roles have a purpose; Christian couples are living illustrations of the relationship between Jesus and His church. A Christian married to an unbeliever has a different role, which also is described in the New Testament.

- I. (Ephesians 5:22 – 33) The relationship of marriage is a teaching tool for life with God
 - A. The topic of the letter is primarily about grace, so evangelism is not in the forefront. However, marriage is a means by which we demonstrate grace to the world. The natural man cannot understand the things of God (1 Co 2:14) – so this is an illustration of grace to the natural man
 - B. 5:25 – As Christ loves the church
 1. 1:22-23 – The church is the fullness of Him
 - a. 5:28 – 29 As his own body (the qualifier of self-love – as we love others) Jesus loves His own body (the church) for whom He gave up His physical body. Husbands love their own bodies (their wives) in that way.
 - b. 4:13 Maturity, unity, and knowledge build to the fullness of Christ
 2. 2:19 God's household, from which He speaks and with which He is identified
 3. 3:10 The manifold wisdom of God is known through the church
 - C. 5:21 – 22 – Be subject to (middle voice)
 1. Does not say to subjugate her
 2. 1:22 All things in subjection to Him – How much subjection do we see?
 - D. 5:31 – Leave and cleave
 1. 4:5 – One (not two)
 2. 4:16 – Body (functioning as a unit)
 - E. 3:10 Manifold wisdom of God – through marriage
 1. 4:1 Walk in a manner worthy;
 2. 4:30 God is grieved by sin
 3. 5:3, 4, 15 Marriage is proper, fitting, and wise (not a lesser estate)
 - F. How does Jesus treat you if you are not perfect? Do you expect more of your spouse than of yourself? Do we have a different standard of behavior toward a spouse?
 1. 1:15 – love for all the saints. Example: nurture, don't punish; commiserate, don't chastise; love is not vindictive
 2. 4:32 Kind, tender-hearted, forgiving; as God in Christ has forgiven you;
 3. 2:4 – 5 Marriage based on grace, not based on meeting expectations
 - G. Equality 2:14 broke down the dividing wall. Who would have thought that men and women could be equal, yet women voluntarily take the follower's role. It is an illustration of how we are with Jesus, equal, yet followers. 2:6 Seated us with Him – as wives should be
 - H. 1:18 Riches of the glory of His inheritance, heart enlightened – in marriage
- II. To husbands (5:25 gave Himself up for her)
 - A. 5:26 – Cleanse her
 1. 1:4 – 5 As we were made holy and blameless
 2. 2:5 – Make us alive together with Christ
 3. 4:23 – We are renewed
 - B. 5:26 – Sanctify her (having cleansed her)
 1. 1:13 John 17:17, Romans 15:16, 1 Peter 3:15

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2. 2:10 – For good works prepared beforehand; give her the opportunity to serve
 - C. 5:29 – Nourish
 1. 6:10 – 17 – Full armor
 2. 2:21 – 22 - Growing into the Temple of God
 3. 3:17 – 19 - Rooted and grounded in love
 4. 4:23 – 24 - Renewed, new self
 - D. 5:33 – Love wife
 1. 3:12 – Feel inadequate? Boldness and confident access
 2. How did Jesus feel about His task?
 3. Can be done only by faith using all the parts (body, mind, and spirit)
- III. To wives
- A. 5:22 – 3 – Wives follow voluntarily
 1. 3:10 The angels have tremendous power, yet they are subject
 - a. Hebrews 1
 - b. Revelation 5
 - c. Wives have the same role as angels
 2. 1 Timothy 2:8 – 15
 - a. Male leadership in the church illustrates Jesus leadership
 - b. Modest women illustrate the humble church
 - c. Uncontentiously receiving instruction illustrates the church's attitude toward the Word
 - d. Genesis 2:18 God intentionally created them in sequence, starting the 'older brother' concept
 - e. Genesis 3:16 Male leadership is part of the woman's curse
 - f. Childbirth, although painful (Genesis 3:16), will not destroy this relationship, because of faith, love, sanctity, and self-restraint.
 - B. 5:33 – Fear husband (fear God) – What does this mean?
 1. 5:21 Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ
 2. Acts 18:9 Not 'afraid' fear, but deferential fear (different words)
 - C. 6:5 – 9 Like servants. Wives are the enablers, as the church is for Jesus
- IV. Mixed marriages
- A. Christians should not marry unbelievers
 1. General principle: no entangling alliances (2 Corinthians 6:14)
 2. Widows (1 Corinthians 7:39)
 3. It is difficult to illustrate the relationship of Jesus and the church when either role is being played unwillingly by an unbeliever.
 - B. Make the best of existing mixed marriages
 1. 1 Corinthians 7:12 – 16
 - a. Don't use the church as an excuse for divorce
 - b. The unbeliever is put to godly purposes by the believer
 - c. The children are not tainted by the mixed marriage
 - d. Writing to a group that had existed only a few years, so mixed marriages were the norm
 2. 1 Peter 3:1 – 6
 - a. Objective: evangelism
 - b. Method: chaste and respectful behavior