

My Sister, My Bride

“You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride” (Song of Songs 4:9).

Scripture has a lot to say about husbands and wives, and if you have been reading carefully in Genesis surely you have observed Abraham and Sarah modeling marriage for us. God instituted marriage; therefore, it is holy unto Him. Matrimony is the union between a man and a woman that are first brother and sister, second friends, and third lovers. The order is significant. What makes a good wife? Here is a brief account of the role of a wife. A marriage operates smoothly when each partner functions in his or biblical role. So let's look at five principles that the Bible depicts on the role of a wife.

1. She Is a Helper

In Genesis 2:18 said, *“¹⁸ Then Adonai Elohim said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. Let Me make a well-matched helper for him’” (ezer kenegdo).* This could be translated, *“a helper to complete him,”* which would seem to imply that a man without his wife is incomplete. The language in Hebrew is hard to render in English, but let's focus on the main point: God provided the woman to be a *well-matched helper*.

Many women today think *if I'm a helper, I am inferior. That is a mistake.* In the Body of Messiah no one is superior or inferior to anyone else. Each of us is given a place and function. What God requires of us is faithfulness in the particular place and function He has assigned us.

In John 14:16-17 *Yeshua* speaks of the provision He will make for His disciples after He leaves them: *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper... the Spirit of truth.”* So *Yeshua* describes the Holy Spirit as *Helper*, but does that mean the Holy Spirit is inferior? By implication, we could also say, *“I will ask the Father, and He will give you a wife.”*

In the same way, a wife who fulfills her God-given role as helper is in no way inferior on that account. I thank God that my wife has been to me a wonderful helper. I could never have achieved what I have without my wife Marilyn.

2. She Submits to Her Husband

This concept has been the subject of much controversy in recent years, yet Scripture states: *“²¹ Also submit yourselves to one another out of reverence for Messiah – ²²wives to your own husbands as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22).* Much of the controversy is due to the fact that this verse has been detached from its biblical context. The previous verse is addressed to all Believers: *“submit yourselves to one another out of reverence for Messiah.”* This is the primary submission within the Body of Messiah – all *submit to one another*. This is a distinctive of Believers – a meek, submissive attitude toward our fellow believers.

Within this context of mutual submission, the wife is granted a unique and special privilege: by her attitude toward her husband, she depicts the attitude of the Messianic Community toward Messiah. Seen in this context, submission is not a duty imposed on the wife, but a special privilege granted her.

Both Peter (who was married) and Paul (who was unmarried) began their teaching on order in the home with the wife's responsibility to submit to her husband. There is a practical reason for this: if the wife does not fulfill her responsibility, it is almost impossible for the husband to fulfill his. The wife holds the key either to open the door to her husband's fulfillment of his role as head of the family, or else to close the door against him. If the wife does not submit willingly to her husband's headship, there is only one way he can take that position – by self-assertive domination. No sensible wife would want that!

What if a wife chooses not to submit and her husband chooses not to take his place as head? Such a family is left unprotected spiritually. Like a ship on a stormy sea with no captain on the bridge it is

doomed to suffer shipwreck. This is a primary cause of social instability and disorder in our day. There is only one truly effective solution: to restore divine order in our families.

Marilyn was spiritually more mature than I was when we were first married (Marilyn actually led me to the Lord.) Had she wished to dominate me spiritually, she would have had no trouble doing so. But to her credit she allowed this inexperienced young believer husband to be head of the home. She must have suffered agonies at some of the things I did! If Marilyn had held onto her place as spiritual leader of our home, I would have gone through life as *Marilyn's husband*. Thank God, Marilyn let me take my place.

3. She Upholds and Supports

God has so created the human body that the head cannot hold itself up. If the man is the head of the home, it is the body that has to hold him up. And the one primarily responsible is the wife. We men have many weaknesses. We need support. We can put on a macho exterior and throw our weight around, but inside we are often wimpy mice. A spiritual wife will see her husband's weaknesses but not focus on them. Rather she will uphold him, wisely and tactfully, as he struggles to overcome them.

4. She Encourages

There is nothing more painful than a wife who discourages her husband. Imagine a preacher who has just delivered a poor sermon and faced a disappointing response from his congregation. If his wife says on the way home, *that was a terrible sermon*, he can sink no lower; he is a worm! But if she says, *that wasn't one of your best sermons, but I enjoyed it*, he begins to think, *well, maybe there's hope. Maybe I can make it after all*.

We have already pointed out that one title of the *Ruach* is *Helper*, but the Greek word could also be translated *Encourager*. When a wife encourages her husband she is fulfilling a role of the Spirit of God.

5. She Intercedes for Her Husband

Wives sometimes fall into the trap of spending so much time worrying about their husbands (criticizing and pointing out their faults) instead of praying for them. A wife on her knees thanking God for her husband will reap the benefits. Interceding produces better dividends than criticizing or complaining.