

# Built on Covenant: God's Heart for Marriage

## *Session 3 — Roles: Love, Responsibility, and Mutual Submission*

### Session Aim

This session explores how the marriage covenant shapes the way husbands and wives live, serve, and lead within marriage. Roles are not power structures, but as covenant responsibilities expressed through love, sacrifice, and mutual submission.

### Section 1 — Mutual Submission: The Covenant Frame

#### **Ephesians 5:21 (KJV)**

*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

This verse is the gateway to the entire passage on marriage roles. Paul does not begin with instructions to wives or husbands. He begins with a command addressed to the whole Christian community: mutual submission rooted in reverence for God.

Submission here is first vertical before it is horizontal. It is a response to God, not merely to one's spouse. It is not silence, passivity, or loss of dignity. Submission is the deliberate choice to place covenant faithfulness above self-protection.

When verse 21 is ignored, everything that follows becomes distorted. Without mutual submission, instructions to husbands become domination, and instructions to wives become silencing. With verse 21 in place, roles become expressions of love and service.

### Section 2 — The Role of the Husband: Covenant Leadership as Sacrifice

#### **Ephesians 5:25–27 (KJV)**

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Paul defines the husband's role not by authority, control, or decision-making power, but by sacrifice. The model is Christ Himself.

Christ's leadership of the church takes this form - He gives Himself. He absorbs pain rather than deflecting it. He moves first in love, not waiting for perfection or performance.

Covenant leadership is therefore costly. It requires initiative without entitlement, authority without harshness, and strength expressed through gentleness.

Any form of leadership that demands submission without sacrifice, obedience without love, or silence without safety is not Christlike leadership and must be clearly rejected.

### **Roles of Husband – Derek Prince**

#### **a. To Be Head — Responsibility, Not Domination**

*1 Corinthians 11:3 (KJV) "The head of the woman is the man..."*

The head:

Receives input from the whole body

Makes decisions

Initiates action

Gives ongoing direction

#### **b. To Provide — A Moral Obligation**

*1 Timothy 5:8 (KJV) "If anyone does not provide for his own... he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."*

Provision is not optional; Failure to provide is described as denying the faith

This includes more than finances: - stability, responsibility for the household

#### **c. To Wash with the Word — Spiritual Leadership in the Home**

*Ephesians 5:26 (KJV) "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."*

The husband bears primary responsibility for spiritual instruction in the home

The Word of God has a cleansing and sanctifying effect

This does not deny a wife's gifting or ministry

d. To Nourish and Cherish — Kindness and Sensitivity

*Ephesians 5:29 (KJV) "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it..."*

Nourish = sustain, strengthen, care for; Cherish = treat with tenderness and value

## Section 3 — The Role of the Wife: Covenant Partnership and Strength

### **Ephesians 5:22–24 (KJV)**

*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*

### **1 Peter 3:7 (KJV)**

*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

Submission in Scripture is relational, not absolute. It is offered freely as an act of trust in God, not as submission to sin, abuse, coercion, or fear.

The call to wives is immediately balanced by a strong call to husbands to live with understanding, to show honour, and to recognise their wives as equal heirs of God's grace. Where honour is absent, spiritual life itself is hindered.

Biblical submission assumes strength, discernment, and moral agency. It does not erase voice, wisdom, or conscience.

### **Role of Wife (Derek Prince)**

a. To Be a Helper — Not Inferior, But Essential

*Genesis 2:18 (KJV) "I will make him a helper comparable to him."*

"Helper" does not mean inferior

No one in the Body of Christ is inferior or superior

Each person has a role and responsibility

b. To Submit — Within Mutual Submission

*Ephesians 5:22 (KJV)* “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”

Scripture often addresses wives first; Because a wife’s response strongly affects whether a husband can fulfill his role

“The wife has the key either to open the door or close the door to the husband’s fulfillment of his role.”

c. To Support — Holding Up the Head

The head cannot hold itself up; The body must support it

Support includes patience, understanding, and allowance for weakness

d. To Encourage — Reflecting the Holy Spirit

Discouragement from a wife deeply wounds a husband

Encouragement restores hope and confidence

“Comforter” is better translated Encourager

When a wife encourages her husband, she reflects the Holy Spirit’s role

e. To Intercede — Spiritual Covering Through Prayer

Worrying and criticizing do not change a husband

Persistent intercession does

## **Section 4 — Roles as Responsibility, Not Entitlement**

**Philippians 2:3–5 (KJV)**

*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

Covenant roles answer a different question than culture does. Culture asks, 'What am I owed?' Covenant asks, 'What am I responsible for?'

Roles do not grant permission to demand; they create responsibility to serve. If roles become a way to win arguments or silence disagreement, covenant has already been lost.

## Section 5 — Practical Covenant Outworking

### Colossians 3:18–19 (KJV)

*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

Paul identifies two covenant dangers: bitterness and withdrawal. Bitterness corrodes love quietly. Withdrawal starves the relationship of presence and care.

Covenant calls spouses to address resentment early, to return to love even after disappointment, and to choose gentleness under pressure.