

God's Design For Wives

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[0 : 00] Well, how do you protect your home? I'm sure you do something, especially in South Africa, to keep your home safe.! Do you have maybe a fence around your house?

I'm sure you have a lock on the door. Maybe you have an alarm system. Maybe you're subscribed to armed response. Maybe you even have a weapon under the bed. Who knows?

We all take some steps, don't we, to protect our home against those who are out there intent on harming it.

Because sadly, in our country, we know all too well that there are people out there intent on doing us harm. And so we take steps to protect our home.

Well, do you know there are also spiritual forces out there? We can't see them, but they are also there, and there are evil spiritual forces intent on harming our homes and our families.

[1 : 02] And fences do not stop them. And so what are you doing to oppose those spiritual forces that are out there intent on harming your home and your family?

Well, last week, as we started this series in God's design for the family, we discovered that the Christian family that follows God's design for their family is actually a key weapon that God uses to fight evil in this world.

If you weren't here last week, listen to that sermon, because it's quite an important teaching. That the Christian family unit as God has designed it is a key weapon, key force in this world against evil. And therefore, that's why we're doing the series we're doing, so that we can look at God's design for the family. But for the next two weeks, this Sunday and next Sunday, we're going to dive into the relationship that is central to that family unit working, which is the relationship of marriage.

Because when a marriage is done God's way, it has an extraordinary power against both the evil that's out there as well as the sin that's in here.

[2 : 16] And so we're going to look at the power of a Christian marriage. And that power comes from two key features of a Christian marriage that make it different to other marriages in the world.

That distinguish a Christian marriage from other types of marriage relationship. And those two key features are submission and sacrifice. Those are the two key features in the Bible of Christian marriages.

And that is the pattern that God lays out in His Word for how He wants marriages to function.

Submission and sacrifice. And we see this, for example, in the passage we read earlier in Ephesians 5, where God instructs us through the Apostle Paul, Wives, submit to your husbands as the church submits to Christ.

And husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up sacrificially for her. And that pattern that's laid out there of submission and sacrifice is actually what gives Christian marriages their power against evil, their power to protect their home against sin and evil, when it's modeled on Jesus' relationship with us.

Because that's where the pattern comes from. And we see it in a passage like Ephesians 5. And Paul makes this explicit later. Not only does he say, you know, submit as the church submits to Christ and husbands, love as Christ loves.

[3 : 48] But he makes it explicit that this whole relationship is actually modeled on the gospel. In chapter 5 from verse 31, he writes, That's what he's saying.

You see, he's saying there that God's pattern for a marriage that actually works, and don't we need that in our world today? A pattern for a marriage that actually works. Paul's saying here, God's pattern for a marriage that works is one that copies how the gospel works.

How Jesus relates to us. And how Jesus saves people from their sins. In other words, a marriage that works actually draws from God's playbook in how to overcome sin in this world.

And so how does God overcome sin? How does Jesus save people from their sins? Well, that's what the gospels are for.

I mean, if you don't know how Jesus saves people from their sins, come join Discover Jesus. Where we look at the strategy God used to overcome sin in this world.

[5 : 11] And so what strategy was that? What weapons did Jesus use to defeat darkness when he came? Well, surprisingly, the weapons Jesus used were submission and sacrifice.

And nobody ever expected that. Not least of all his enemies. His enemies never expected that when the Messiah comes, this is what he's going to do. That he's going to be humble and meek and lowly of heart.

It confused them. And it confused his friends as well. People expected the Messiah to come fight evil with power and authority from heaven. But instead, he did it by being meek.

And by submitting, even to corrupt leaders. And even to death itself. And by sacrificing his life. It was something nobody ever expected.

But that's how Jesus came to defeat evil. Through submission and sacrifice. But why? Why did he need to do it that way? Why were those the things that defeated the powers of darkness in this world?

[6 : 24] Well, I'll tell you why. It's because they don't know how to counter things like that. They don't know what to do with people who are willing to put themselves last.

The forces of evil and darkness in this world are unfamiliar with tactics like submission and sacrifice. It's not how they operate. They don't know what to do with that.

Because those things are actually deeply godly. There's something deeply godly about submission and sacrifice. Evil does not know how to do those things. Evil in this world and in the spiritual realm is all about power and control.

And taking. Not giving. And meekness. And giving up control.

These things are deeply godly. Evil does not know how to do those things. And therefore, these things, submission and sacrifice, are actually God's secret weapons against evil in this world.

[7 : 31] And so whenever we learn how to do those things, adopt those attitudes in whatever context, whoever we are as Christians, in work or at school, when we learn actually to peaceably and humbly submit to those over us, when we learn to sacrifice and give of our time to others who don't deserve it, when we learn to let go of power rather than grabbing it, when we learn to give rather than to take, well, what we're doing then is we're actually drawing on God's own playbook in how to confound the evil forces in our world.

And this is especially so in our homes. And that's why in a Christian marriage, wives are called to submit to husbands, and husbands are called to sacrifice for their wives.

Now, for the rest of the time today, we're going to focus on the thorny and controversial issue of the wife's role in that relationship of submission.

And it needs the rest of our time today to touch upon that. And that's why next week we're going to look at the husband's role. But for the rest of our time this morning, we're going to look at the challenge of submission.

Now, the Bible says in multiple places, wives, submit to your husbands. Now, the moment we hear that, it offends us.

[9 : 04] Let's be honest. Not just the woman. Okay? The men as well. We're uncomfortable with reading that. It grates us, doesn't it? This clear and unashamed command in the Bible, wives, submit to your husbands.

It offends us, it grates against us, because it's so counter-cultural. Because we live in a culture that thinks completely opposite to that. That's why it offends us.

It sounds misogynistic and outdated. It's why people, you know, read things in the Bible like that and go, oh, that's not relevant for today. And that's why the first thing we need to do this morning is to clear up some misunderstandings about what submission means.

Okay? Okay? Submission in a marriage. Firstly, what it is not. Okay? Submission is not blind obedience to a husband's every demand.

Especially if that is against obedience to Christ. Because Christ as Lord is always a Christian wife's first and primary authority in her home.

[10 : 12] Over her husband. And so it's not blind obedience to every demand. Secondly, submission is not that a wife's opinion is less valuable or valid than a husband's.

And also, it's not, submission of a wife is not permission for the husband to always get his way. Or to win every argument.

Okay? So that is what submission is not. But what is submission then? What does it mean when the Bible tells wives, submit to your husbands? Well, you can go deeply into explaining what the biblical word submission means.

But at its heart, what it is, is a giving up of control. It's a seeding of control of situation to someone else.

That's really at its heart what submission is. And it's recognizing that God has established in every home an authority structure.

[11:16] And appointed a leader for that authority structure. And that is something that all structures need. A one person to lead it.

And we see this in the secular world. Take, for example, a rugby team. We're familiar with how a rugby team works, right? Okay? Springboks.

Sia Khaleesi is the captain. He's the leader. He's the one who has been appointed to lead. One person. Appointed to make the decisions. However, that does not mean that they're, and we know this all too well in the Springboks, it doesn't mean that the other players are less capable than Sia Khaleesi.

Or that they're less important. I mean, what would the Springboks be without Ibn Etzebeth and Chez and Colby, right? And yet, there needs to be one person to lead and make the final decisions for the team to work.

Well, it's the same in a family. And God has appointed that leadership role for His reasons to the husband. To the, I've got to be clear these days, the biologically male partner in the marriage.

[12:28] Now, when a husband does that well, it's not that hard for the wife to follow his lead, right?

It's like dancing. I don't know if you've done ballroom dancing, but there's a leader and a kind of follower in, I don't know too much about ballroom dancing, but there's a leader in the dancing. And who doesn't like a strong lead when you're dancing? Who doesn't like the person who knows what the steps are, who can lead you along? That's great. And you enjoy yourself and you have fun. It's good.

But, in a dance, when the leader doesn't actually know the steps, and when you are following, but you actually in your head know the steps better than them, well then it makes sense to take over, right?

And to start leading yourself because you know better how to do that in a dance. Now, this might shock you, but I'm not a very good dancer. And every now and again, Jean and I have danced at a wedding or something, and I'll start out, and I don't know what I'm doing.

[13:38] I'm just kind of walking or looking at the other people. And then Jean, who's done ballroom dancing, she'll eventually go, no, no, you've got to put your foot here and you've got to do this. And then we start and I kind of follow her lead, and we go and we have a nice time.

But, now you'd think, you'd think the same applies in a home, right? That whoever is actually better at leading should lead. But the surprising thing in the Bible is that that's not the case in God's design for marriage.

God calls wives to submit to their husbands' lead even when the husbands aren't doing well at that. Or even when they're not playing their role at all.

I've often been asked this by wives. Must I submit to my husband only when he's doing his role? And the Bible's answer is no.

You must submit even when he's not. We see this clearly in 1 Peter. So turn there in your Bibles, because we're going to spend the rest of our time in this very important passage talking about a wife's role in her home.

[14:51] 1 Peter chapter 3. 1 Peter 3 verse 1.

I want you to see what that says. We'll also have the relevant verses on the screen behind me. 1 Peter 3 verse 1 says, Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands, so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives.

Now the original language is even stronger than husbands that do not believe the word. It says husbands that do not obey the word. They're literally going against God's design.

They're not doing their biblical role. In this case, they're not even Christians. It's obviously talking about families where the wife became a Christian after they were married.

And the husband didn't. And in that situation, however, God still calls wives to submit to their husbands. But I want you to notice why that's so important.

[16:06] This is key. It's because of the power that her willing submission will have in their home against evil. Look again from verse 1.

Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands, so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Okay, Peter says here that there's great power in a wife's submission to her husband because her willing submission has a way of winning the unbelieving husband to Christ.

Do you see that? The wife's submission has a way of winning over and defeating evil's influence and control in that situation and winning her unbelieving husband to Christ because there's something good and godly about it.

There's something good and godly about this submission. In fact, Peter goes on to say it's beautiful.

[17:22] It's actually a beautiful thing in a home. Look from verse 3 to 4. He goes on.

He says to wives, So you see what he's saying here?

What makes people beautiful is not the makeup they put on, not the clothes they wear, not the hairstyles. What truly makes people beautiful is a character that reflects their Creator.

And in this case, a character that reflects the peace and the calm and the submission. which when a husband in a home, even if he's not a Christian, experiences this in his home, it's attractive.

He's attracted to it. It's beautiful. And he has no choice but to admit that his wife being a Christian is a good thing for his family.

[18:43] You know, often, non-Christian, when there's a situation, and I've spoken to many Christian wives in the situation where their husband's not a Christian, it'll be hard.

And he'll even make it hard for her to come to church and to go to Bible study. Because he thinks that, you know, these Christian people are taking his wife away from him.

But what happens when she actually starts to exhibit these godly characteristics in her home is that the husband starts to realize that it's a good thing she's a Christian. That it's improved their home. It's improved their marriage. And there's less conflict in their home. And you see, that's the beauty of voluntary, willing submission.

Remember, this is something that darkness can't counter. Evil forces don't know what to do with it. And now, if that is true in a non-Christian home or with a non-Christian husband, how much more true in a Christian home?

[19:43] With a Christian husband who at least is trying to do his role. it'll be even more the case that this is going to beautify the home. But also, we read on and we see submission is not just beautiful to people.

It's beautiful to God. Look at the end of verse 4 again. the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is of great worth in God's sight.

In God's sight. It's beautiful to God when a wife submits to her husband and I think especially when that husband is not doing his role well to still let him lead to still defer control to him is of great worth in God's sight.

Why? Well, here's why I think God loves to see that because when a wife does that a calm voluntary willing submission to a husband who's even not doing his part that that shows it exhibits a profound trust in God from her.

It shows that she really trusts God's sovereignty over her home when she's willing to do that when she's willing to give up control. Which is in fact the very opposite of Eve's failure in the garden which we read about in Genesis chapter 3.

[21:21] What was her failure? Well, she didn't trust God. She didn't trust what God said. She wanted control and she ended up leading her husband. But when a Christian woman trusts God as her ultimate leader who's ultimately in control of her situation and her home and her family enough that she can let go of control, well, that results in a peace and a quietness and an order that God delights in.

And it's that which will disarm evil forces seeking to upset your marriage and your home. submission is not weakness because of this.

Submission is actually one of the most spiritually powerful things you can do. It doesn't seem like it. The world does not see it that way, but according to the Bible, submission is powerful against evil. And it's also one of the bravest things you can do as a Christian wife. Which is why Peter goes on and he ends his little section to wives with the example of Sarah.

Let me read from verse 5 to 6. Talking about this gentle and quiet voluntary submission, he goes on and says, for this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves.

[23 : 00] They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her Lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Sarah was Abraham's wife and that was not an easy job. I just want you to think what that would have been like for a second.

She had to up and leave her home and her people and everything she knew and take this journey through the desert following her husband because of a supposed conversation he had with a God. But she followed and she supported him even when he was doing the wrong thing. Now if you look at the story in Genesis of Abraham and Sarah he made some serious mistakes.

Especially with his dealing with Pharaoh. You remember that? They went to Egypt. They're approaching the most powerful man in the ancient world who runs the most powerful country and Abraham is like Sarah before we see him let's lie to him.

[24 : 17] Let's say you're my sister not my wife so that he'll like me and not be jealous of me. Now that wasn't a very good plan and it ended up in a mess. Fortunately under God's sovereignty it turned out okay.

But you can imagine that there were many times when Sarah would have gone really Abraham is that the best solution for this problem?

and yet she supported she followed his lead she trusted that God would work it out because she through this journey had come to know God herself and more and more as you follow the story she's trusting him but the way you see her trust in God is that she's following her husband who God is leading and also she supported Abraham when he was asked to do the impossible and sacrifice his own son Isaac remember that spoiler alert he didn't end up sacrificing his son because he passed the test but that whole episode with Abraham being called to sacrifice Isaac we always think about and talk about Abraham's great faith in that moment right but what about Sarah how much faith did she need to let him do that she knew what was going on a woman knows when he packed the wood for the sacrifice but didn't take an animal with him after having this moment with God and he took Isaac and they started up the mountain and Sarah stayed behind in the tents she knew what was going on how much faith did she need in that moment to let him do that and that's why Peter holds her up as this beautiful example of brave and attractive faith because she was able to continue submitting to and supporting her husband even when it was really hard to do that and God achieved amazing things through that family and when Christian women do the same in their homes today they are called her daughters when they do not give way to fear of letting go of control and they exercise a voluntary and godly submission that is brave especially in a world that disapproves of it and that displays deep faith in

God as their true Lord and master well it's that that will adorn and beautify their home and their marriage with a heavenly Christ like beauty that evil doesn't know how to counter let's pray that our homes will be beautiful will you bow with me Lord we hear your words and often they grate up against us they rub up the wrong way and they seem so out of step with how we think and we thank you Lord that you give us your word to challenge our thinking and we thank you Lord for the beauty of submission and sacrifice that you showed when you were here and that's how you saved us would you help us Lord as we we look this week and next week at the roles of husband and wife in the home would you help us to hear and to obey and to adorn our homes with this gospel beauty that will overcome evil and would you

[28 : 13] Lord be the ultimate authority in our homes in Jesus name Amen