

What Every Husband Needs to Understand About Ephesians 5

The other day, I was changing the channels on my television when I hit a station and heard the voice of a well-known preacher. He was speaking on the subject of marriage, which is a favorite topic of mine, so I stopped for a moment to listen. It wasn't long before he made a statement that I hear often repeated from the pulpit of both synagogues and churches. "There is a hierarchy in the family: husband, wife and then children, and this is G-D's plan for the family structure."

I cannot tell you how many times I have heard those or similar words being spoken by rabbis and pastors, yet, no matter how hard you look, you won't find this in the Scriptures. Most often, when making this statement, pastors will quote from Ephesians 5:23 (TLV) as their proof text:

"For the husband is head of the wife, as Messiah also is head of His community—Himself the Savior of the body. But as Messiah's community is submitted to Messiah, so also the wives to their husbands in everything."

And if one just reads those verses, it is easy to see how they would conclude a hierarchy, or flow chart, of authority from these words. The problem is that Ephesians chapter 5 does not begin with verse 23, and only two verses earlier in Ephesians 5:21, we read: "Also submit yourselves to one another out of reverence for Messiah—."

Notice that verse 21 also isn't the beginning of chapter 5, which begins not with a lesson on marriage, but rather it begins with 20 verses encouraging believers to abstain from unrighteous acts against one another. Then we get to verse 21, which instructs that husbands and wives must first submit to one another. Then and only then does the text continue with

the husband's responsibility for his wife. You will note that I used the word "responsibility" rather than "authority," because a careful reading of the text demonstrates these verses are not speaking of the husband's ability to command or demand submission of his wife. No, these verses are speaking of a husband's spiritual responsibility for his wife to the point of laying down his life for her.

Unfortunately, we too often think of things in the way of who is most important and so we line up things in an order of importance, or greater authority, as in husband, wife, and children or even rabbi/pastor, leadership team, and membership, when it is clear that is not at all how G-D views things. In His word, He says clearly in Romans 2:11: "For there is no partiality with God."

And in 1 Corinthians 12, we are instructed to not hold one part of the body as more important than any other. Even from the very beginning of the Bible, in Genesis 1:27-28, we read: "God created humankind in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the land, and conquer it. Rule over the fish of the sea, the flying creatures of the sky, and over every animal that crawls on the land."

Notice both man and woman are given equal authority over creation. It isn't about who is on top. Only G-D is on top. In His eyes, if we are fulfilling the roles that we were created to fulfill, we are all equal in His kingdom. Like the legendary knights of the round table, G-D is in the center and the only true authority, and we are all fulfilling our roles and responsibilities under His authority.

We should never confuse leadership responsibility with value. The truth is that husbands, wives and children or rabbi/pastor, leadership team and membership have differing roles and responsibilities, but equal kingdom value. {eoa}

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