

Family Legacy Institute

Tools For Families Building Godly Legacies

Marital Mentoring From The Master

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“A man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

Genesis 2:24 ~ NASV

“A newly married man must not be drafted into the army or given any other special responsibilities.”

Deuteronomy 24:5 ~ NLT

“Do not deprive each other of sexual relations.”

I Corinthians 7:5 ~ NLT

“People with good sense restrain their anger; they earn esteem by overlooking wrongs.”

Proverbs 19:11 ~ NLT

I. Introduction

Our culture is in transition. Not many years ago most husbands went to work and most wives stayed home to raise the kids. Husbands earned the money; wives cooked the meals and kept up the house. It's a different world today. The women's liberation movement has had a dramatic impact, and academic fields such as psychology and education have been prime movers in effecting profound changes in roles formerly assumed by men and women. Today it's not unusual to find a wife who earns more than her husband, husbands who do all the cooking ~ even stay-at-home dads.

In previous generations it was mostly men who went to college, and almost exclusively males went on for advanced academic degrees. Today, *more than half of college students are female* and the percentage of female students is still rising. This change alone will surely have an extended impact upon our culture, including the area of marital roles.

So is this good or bad? Is there a “right” or “wrong” way to define marital roles? One would expect scripture to provide instruction in this area: Who should deal with the kids when they disobey? How should marital tiffs be handled ~ should wives always knuckle under? Who should buy the beans; who should bake them? Who's in charge of managing the house, or the budget? Who should take the garbage out of the basement? Is the husband supposed to be the sole bread-winner? Are there specific roles that ought to be occupied by husbands, or wives?

It may come as a bit of a surprise that there is not much information given within scripture specifically defining roles of husbands and wives, or even what marriage itself is supposed to be about. To the surprise of some, scripture does *not* in fact teach that husbands are supposed to drive and water the camels while wives are to cook the beans and raise the kids. Actually, the entire discussion of roles and responsibilities within marriage is highly cultural, and varies widely around the world. Indeed, marital models vary even within scripture. Abraham probably didn't share marital leadership like Aquilla likely did.

Within our culture, the philosophy of post-modernism has thrown everything including marital roles into question. Outside of scripture there is no prevailing definition of truth in our world today. This includes truths about marital roles. Everything is in flux. This tends to make marriage itself a somewhat "iffy" thing, which may give some insight to our 50% divorce rate.

Yet although it doesn't deal much with gender roles, scripture does provide helpful information to husbands and wives. That is the focus of this chapter. In previous chapters we've focused mainly on input from the field of psychology. This chapter will focus more upon the wisdom one can gain from the Bible. Among other things, in this chapter we'll see that God cares far more about the attitudes we bring to one another, than about the roles we adopt as spouses.

II. Specific Instructions To Both Spouses

A. Leave and cleave (join)

The field of psychology teaches the value of "separation," "individuation," and "attachment" previously presented in this book. Scripture doesn't use those words, but communicates similar thoughts. The first thoughts regarding husbands and wives found in scripture, is in *Genesis 2:21-24*, where it says, "***The LORD God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took one of Adam's ribs and closed up the place from which he had taken it. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib and brought her to Adam. 'At last!' Adam exclaimed. 'She is part of my own flesh and bone! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken out of a man.' This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one***" (NLT).

The old King James Version of the Bible says, "***For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.***"

One finds two thoughts in this text. The first is that of leaving home ~ i.e., "separation." The second is cleaving to, or being joined to a spouse ~ i.e., "attachment." One of the more common clinical problems couples bring to therapy involves a spouse who has not truly left home. We hear of a person who is still "tied to mom's apron strings." While it's important for adults to remain positively relationally connected to their parents, the act of marriage requires emotional and physical separation ~ leaving childhood homes and starting one's own family ~ cutting the umbilical cord.

In another chapter (www.family-legacy-institute.com, *Fifteen Essential Parenting Skills*) you learned the term, “cross-generational coalition,” and the danger of triangling. You also learned there is room for only two people in the “executive sub-system.” Spouses who regularly elevate the status and opinions of their mother or father above their spouse, or who maintain closer relationships with either of their parents than they have with their spouse, risk becoming triangled in a cross-generational coalition. Spouses who allow either parent to regularly influence marital or parenting issues, risk having one too many people in the executive sub-system.

The second thought in this Genesis text is that of cleaving to one’s spouse, and becoming “one flesh.” There is little that is as bonding, especially during the early months of marriage, as sexual intercourse. The biblical term “one flesh” means sexual intercourse. But it means more than that. It implies two people who join their entire lives together, and thereafter function as a single unit ~ a unit we have identified in this course as the....