



Keys to Happy Family Living

Christian Living Series

By Henry Brandt, Ph.D.

Lesson 6 – The Wife’s Responsibilities

"... encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored." (Titus 2:4-5, NASB)

This lesson will discuss the broad duties of a wife. In Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12, Paul says that all Christians are members of one body, each member having a different purpose. So it is in a marriage. The husband and wife are one body, each one having a distinct purpose. Teamwork will produce a happy, satisfying partnership.

Submission to Your Husband

What submission means

Again, Paul says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). Many Christians acknowledge that submitting to the Lord was difficult. The decision was postponed again and again because becoming a Christian meant giving up attitudes, practices, and a way of life that gave them pleasure and joy. They believed that life would be dull and uninteresting and frustrating without these pleasures. Then they submitted to the Lord. They found a joy, a peace, a sense of contentment and serenity that made the old way of life seem drab in comparison. There was nothing to give up; there was a far better way to take up.

Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). As the last lesson indicated, this should be the heart attitude of the husband, who is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church. On the other hand, Paul wrote, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands..." (Ephesians 5:22). Does this mean resignation, the end of having an opinion, slave-driving? Not at all! This can really mean teamwork, planning, working out a plan, sharing opinions, stimulating each other to heights previously unknown to either.

Proper submission was further expressed by Paul when he wrote, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). This should be the heart attitude of the

wife toward her husband--following after him as he follows after Christ. Such submission to the leading of a husband is a basic condition for a happy marriage.

Failure to submit illustrated

One couple could not agree on who should control the money and there were other conflicts of opinion. There were many verbal barrages. She wanted a new washer and dryer. He said she would get them over his dead body. Her response was to go buy them. In retaliation, the husband went on a drinking spree that lasted several days. For spite he bought a new car. Do you think that woman had any joy out of her appliances? They were a rebuke to her every time she used them. Nor did the husband enjoy driving that car.

Here were two people who had acquired some equipment that should have given each of them joy and satisfaction. Instead, these useful things became a continuing bone of contention. Behind the strife over money was the unsettled question of submission. Both persons were asserting a spirit of independence and selfishness.

Submission illustrated

In one sense, the wife has the greater adjustment to make after marriage. This is especially true if she has had the experience of working at a steady job, if she has tasted the stimulation and challenge of the business world. Her husband goes on with his career. The wife must often leave a position that is interesting and pleasant for other tasks that seemingly are uninteresting, less pleasant, less challenging. Submission to the routine of managing the home and parenthood is essential to building a happy marriage.

To illustrate, a young wife had to return to work after two years of marriage. This seemed necessary because she and her husband were unable to make the down payment on the purchase of a house. She had looked forward to marriage with much joy and anticipation. After the wedding she gladly gave up her job in an office in order to become a homemaker. Very quickly, however, she discovered that such things as sweeping, scrubbing, washing, pregnancy, diapers, and feeding children were not to her liking. This she kept to herself. She did grin and bear it. This was her own little secret. However, she cast longing eyes at the outside world. She gladly returned to work to help out with expenses. The thoughts of returning to activities that she loved were most comforting. However, she found that getting back to work did not develop into the pleasant task that she had hoped. She found herself divided between the attraction of the work world and the duties of parenthood and homemaking. She began to realize that her willingness to return to work was based more on her dislike for homemaking than upon her desire to help with the finances. Fleeing the task of homemaking was not the answer any more than fleeing from Nineveh was the answer for Jonah. Her basic problem was submission. How would she ever adjust to homemaking? She found the answer. The answer was not to grin and bear it. The answer was to submit to the joy and peace that God would give her to do the job. In either case, she did the work; but submitting to God made it a pleasant, enjoyable task.

Remember the truth expressed in God's word to Israel: "If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land" (Isaiah 1:19). Obedience is not enough. Submitting to your husband means willingly submitting also to the responsibilities of homemaking--not resignation, but submission.

Submission to Older Women

One of the tasks given to "aged women" is that of teaching "the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored" (Titus 2:4-5).

Here is a new career to master. Paul suggests that the wife should look to older, more experienced women for training. This is a wholesome concept. Most big businesses pass knowledge gained from many years of service down from older, experienced employees to new, inexperienced employees. In this way, the best methods are preserved. This again implies submission. It implies the willingness to learn from others. This idea goes counter to much modern-day thinking--that older people have nothing to contribute to the younger generation. To give proper honor and appreciation to the older women and to be willing to learn from them would save untold heartaches for many young women.

The Proper Spirit

Genuine love (Titus 2:4)

One of the great privileges of a wife is that of loving her husband and her children. This love is not stimulated by the husband or the children alone but must first come from God and go out to them. What is meant by love? It is not hugs and kisses. It is not passion. You need not be married to find someone who can arouse passion within you. On the other hand, a husband and wife can embrace each other, and yet each knows that there is some barrier between them. An invisible but very real wall can separate husband, wife, and children. This is well expressed by an old song:

There is a wall between us;

It's not made of stone:

The more we are together,

The more I am alone.

It is Christian love that binds--gentleness, kindness, goodness, patience, long-suffering, compassion, and temperance.

Many wives say, "If he treats me well, I will treat him well. The responsibility is on him. I'm good because he is good." Thank God that the alternative to be good or bad does not lie with someone else! It is a decision for you to make. This is a struggle. Often you must

struggle with the decision to look to God for love to bestow upon a husband or a child who may not return it. You can submit to your marriage with a stony heart, or with a loving heart.

A worker at home

To be a worker at home is also a high calling (Titus 2:4-5). Wise purchasing, wise planning, and creating a wholesome atmosphere in the home require the best that is in you.

It is a fortunate man who finds a woman who will dedicate herself to keeping the home and maintaining a happy relationship with her children and her husband. These verses point out that such a woman has a ministry. Through her behavior the Word of God will not be blasphemed (Titus 2:5).

For a woman to give herself to her family is a high calling, indeed. Essentially, our Lord poured His life into only twelve men.

The proper adorning

Peter speaks of a quality in a wife that is "precious in the sight of God." He speaks of this with reference to a wife whose husband is "disobedient to the word." However, any wife will do well to live by this exhortation in I Peter 3:1-4. These days, there is much emphasis upon outward appearance. Women spend a great deal of time and money on clothes, jewelry, care of the complexion and hair. How many spend hours styling their hair, putting on jewelry and flattering clothes ... ! Now women should look just as lovely as they possibly can. The intent of this passage, however, is to stress the truth that these outward things are not the ornaments that are of God. This is the ornament that counts: "Let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."

You should, of course, care for your body. In addition, and more important, is a meek and quiet spirit that shines through your face, gets into your muscles, into your nervous system, and into your heart. Why? For your own good, of course. For your own happiness, of course. But just as important is your influence on your husband, the atmosphere that you create for the people in your life. A meek and quiet spirit that dominates your life is one of the greatest accomplishments possible for a wife. It is, in the sight of God, of great price. Such a spirit will win the man who is "disobedient to the word."

Recently the wife of a man who was not a Christian told of this incident. Her husband came home late from work because he stopped on the way home to play golf. She resented this very much and was seething within when he came home. After supper he announced, "Honey, we are going out for a ride. I have a surprise for you." She did not want to go anywhere because she wanted to nurse her grievance. He insisted. They stopped in front of a pet shop. He went in and came out with a particular parakeet that she had been noticing and had said she would like to have. She tried to look grateful, but within she was very much ashamed.

The parakeet is now at home; but she doesn't enjoy it, for it represents to her a symbol of a seething heart, rather than a gift received with a meek and quiet spirit. This woman is a Christian. Her husband, who is not, treats her better than she treats him. If she wants to influence him for Christ, she must avail herself of the proper equipment--a meek and quiet spirit. Then the Word of God will not be blasphemed.

In these days there are many tottering, weak, unhappy marriages. Could it be that the key to strengthening many of them is in the hands of the wife? This passage from I Peter would say so. You, wives, have a high calling--a great job to be done. The proper dress for the job is spiritual and invisible. It is available only from God--the adornment of a meek and quiet spirit. May each wife who reads these pages submit to the task, and thus provide the haven that her husband and children need in these tense days.

Study Assignment--Review Questions on Lesson 6

This assignment is intended to help you fully understand and remember what this lesson teaches.

1. What is the meaning of submission?
2. How is submission of a wife related to housekeeping?
3. What is the responsibility of older women?
4. What is true love, and where does it come from?
5. How will a godly woman win an unsaved husband?

PERSONAL EVALUATION TEST 3

Check Up on Yourself as a Partner

Husband: Circle true or false to answer Questions 1-6 about yourself. Then have your wife answer the questions about you from her perspective.

Wife: Circle true or false to answer Questions 7-12 about yourself. Then have your husband answer the questions about you from his perspective.

1. I always seek my wife's welfare before my own.

Husband's answer: T F

Wife's answer: T F

2. My wife's opinion is unimportant; so I don't consult her.

Husband's answer: T F

Wife's answer: T F

3. I am accepting Christ's leadership in my life.

Husband's answer: T F

Wife's answer: T F

4. I lead the family regularly in Bible reading and prayer.

Husband's answer: T F

Wife's answer: T F

5. I am thoughtless and ungentlemanly to my wife.

Husband's answer: T F

Wife's answer: T F

6. I take into account the fact that my wife is "the weaker vessel."

Husband's answer: T F

Wife's answer: T F

7. My personal appearance is important.

Wife's answer: T F

Husband's answer: T F

8. I am resolved to treat my husband well only if he treats me well.

Wife's answer: T F

Husband's answer: T F

9. I accept advice willingly from older women.

Wife's answer: T F

Husband's answer: T F

10. I think love is just hugs and kisses.

Wife's answer: T F

Husband's answer: T F

11. I think it is proper to adorn myself with a meek and quiet spirit.

Wife's answer: T F

Husband's answer: T F

12. I am ignoring God's order for a happy home.

Wife's answer: T F

Husband's answer: T F

Mark the statements about which you disagree. Pay special attention to these danger spots.

Visit <http://biblicalcounselinginsights.com/keys-to-happy-family-living-series/answers/> for the answers to these questions.

Self-Check Test 6

How much have you retained?

In the space provided, mark the following statements "True" or "False."

- _____ 1. The submissive wife can share opinions and plans with her husband.
- _____ 2. The wife should follow her husband and the husband should follow the leading of Christ.
- _____ 3. When husband and wife assert their independence, contention results.
- _____ 4. Submission to God can make distasteful tasks enjoyable.

- _____ 5. An invisible but real wall can separate husband and wife.
- _____ 6. Genuine love is kind, gentle, good, patient, and compassionate.
- _____ 7. Opinions of older women are obviously outdated and irrelevant for a young wife.
- _____ 8. The wife should give herself to her family to keep the home and to maintain a happy relationship with her children and husband.
- _____ 9. The wife's most important adornment is a lovely outward appearance.
- _____ 10. While a meek and quiet spirit on the part of a wife might have been practical in earlier days, it is impractical in the modern domestic environment.

Visit <http://biblicalcounselinginsights.com/keys-to-happy-family-living-series/answers/> for the answers to these questions.

Permission to Reproduce and Distribute

Publisher grants permission to reproduce and distribute this material without written approval, but only in its entirety and only for non-profit use. No part of this material may be altered or used out of context without publisher's written permission.

©2012 Biblical Counseling Insights

See www.BiblicalCounselingInsights.com for additional life discipleship resources. Download a free Bible or other spiritual growth resources at www.GodResources.org.