

Gender sermon: Relationships under God Series – part 2

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Ephesians 5:17-33; Genesis 2:15-25

III – Video – gender roles – interviews with kids

Quick Quiz:

- In which country did women first get to vote? 1893 in New Zealand.
- In which year did women get to vote in Australia? 1894 in South Australia (NSW – 1902)
- How many female political leaders are in the world today?
 - 8 female presidents, 9 female prime ministers
- Did you know?... Inventions by women include – Circular saw (1812), Fire escape (1887), the medical syringe (1899), windshield wipers (1903), the rotary engine (1904), the electric hot water heater (1917), the engine muffler (1917), and Kevlar (1966).

Men and women play equally important parts in society, yet even today, there still seems to be great inequality between men and women. When we read the Bible, however, God is very clear about gender **equality**.

Let me start today by saying that this topic is taught very differently across churches, so I want us to be, as always, motivated in seeking the truth **from God's word** on this subject. Because it's important to the way we relate to one another.

I want us to look at these 3 things from God's word today:

1. EQUALITY
2. SIN
3. SUBMISSION

1. EQUALITY

Even though God created us equal, there are different expectations on the roles of men and women in society and culture. Just like in the video we saw earlier.

Different societies and cultures have different gender role expectations – like who does the cooking, the cleaning, looking after the kids, or earning money.

Today, I want to suggest that the Bible doesn't give us those gender roles. Culture and society do. And so we need to really look at what direction the Bible **does** give us for relationships between genders.

Genesis 1:27:

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

There is **equality** here. Men and women are BOTH made in God's image – they are BOTH made equally to be in a personal relationship with God.

In Genesis 2 – and this is **before** the woman has been created – Adam is alone in the Garden of Eden. And all the animals are brought to him to name. But, verse 20 – "for Adam, no suitable **helper** was found." God saw that Adam **needed** a **helper**. And so he created woman.

Now it's important to define that term, "helper". To some, the word "helper" means "inferior". But the Bible actually uses the word "helper" to talk about God as OUR helper! So it certainly isn't an inferior term! For example: (PPT of these verses)

- Exodus 18:4 refers to God as Moses' helper
- In Psalm 27:9 David calls God his helper.

In the Bible, a “helper” is someone who we cannot do without. We **need** God as our helper in life. And as humans, Adam and Eve **need** each other as helpers. Creation is not complete until both man **and** woman are created.

So that’s the first point – man and woman are created equally – in God’s image and as helpers. But that relationship is then damaged because of SIN. And that’s the second thing today:

2. SIN

Genesis 3:16. Have a look at the curse on the woman because of sin:

“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

That is the result of sin. Husbands **ruling** over wives is sin. It’s not what God wants and it’s not what he intended in a marriage relationship. It is a curse.

- **III** – There was a very quiet man who was tired of being bossed around by his wife.

So he went to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist gave him a short book on assertiveness, which he read on the way home. He finished the book by the time he reached his house.

He stormed into his house and walked up to his wife. He points his finger in her face, and says: "From now on, I want you to know that I am the man of this house, and my word is law! I want you to prepare me a gourmet meal tonight, and when I'm finished eating my meal, I expect a sumptuous dessert afterward.

Then, after dinner, you're going to draw me my bath so I can relax. And when I'm finished with my bath, guess who's going to dress me and comb my hair?"

His wife replied: "The funeral director?"

Sin upsets relationships between men and women. But God tells us in his Word how we **should** relate to one another as men and women. In society, in church, and in families. And there is one word that occurs again and again as God instructs us in our relationships. The word is **“submit”**.

3. SUBMISSION

For many people, the word “submit” is negative - it implies “slavery”. “Submit” is a word bullies use on their victims, a word that makes one person inferior to the other. But the Bible uses the word in a very positive way – as a way of talking about **order** in our relationships – in society, in church and in families.

When God says “submit”, there are conditions and reasons. Look at these verses:

- Romans 13:1 – *“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities **for there is no authority except that which God has established.**”*

In society, we are called to submit to governments. But we still must recognise **God’s** authority over **them**. And we **can** oppose our government, but only when they oppose the leadership of God.

- Luke 10:17- the disciples said to Jesus *“Lord even the demons submit to us **in your name.**”*

The disciples can drive out demons, but only in **Jesus’** name. Jesus is the supreme authority that the demons recognise and submit to.

- Hebrews 13:17 for church relationships: *“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as **men who must give an account.**”*

So we submit to the authority of our church leaders **because they are accountable to God**. God is the supreme authority over them. Again, you cannot, and should not, follow a church leader’s headship if they are oppose to God’s Word and leadership.

- And Ephesians 5:24: *“Now **as the church submits to Christ**, so also wives should submit to their husbands.”*

The wife submits to her husband **as her husband leads her like Jesus leads**. The husband is to lead his wife **as Christ leads his church**. So Jesus is the supreme authority over their marriage and also the supreme example of how to lead. And I want to suggest that a woman cannot submit to a husband who doesn’t love her and lead her sacrificially.

In all of these situations, submission is about having **order** in relationships. All are created equal. All are made in God's image. Men and women are made as helpers. But when we step inside a relationship, God calls us to **order** those relationships with submission – a submission that recognises leadership under God.

Let's look in more detail at the family, because the family is the model for the church family.

The husband shows his headship in the way he leads the family. And the Bible nowhere talks about that headship meaning "controlling money" or "making decisions" or "having the final say". What it **does** talk about is "responsibility". Let me put it this way: the husband's role of headship is:

- **Responsibility for the spiritual care of his family.**

Ephesians 5:23:

"The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church."

What is the role of Christ in leading his church?

Verses 26 and 27 – to make her holy... to present her holy and blameless."

It is the **spiritual** responsibility that God is concerned about when he talks about headship in marriage.

The husband is called to **lead spiritually** and **be responsible spiritually**. The wife is called to follow that leadership, to submit to that leadership by supporting her husband in this role, as he leads her like Jesus leads his church.

And in the same way, we are all called to follow our church leaders as they lead us and are spiritually responsible to God for us.

Of course, there are difficulties – for a person married to an unbeliever, for a single person, and for a widow – you will not be able to have that order of submission in the way Ephesians speaks about. But you should be able to find that model of leadership or headship in your church and among your church leaders. Because any church of Jesus should be like a Christian family. And so church leaders should be taking spiritual responsibility for you.

Why is this important? Because, as 1 Corinthians 14:33 says: "God is not a God of disorder, but of peace." God wants us to live in peace, and to have a helpful order in all of our relationships.

But it takes both aspects: It takes Christ-like, sacrificial headship **as well as** godly submission to have order in our relationships.

What does this actually mean? What do we **do** in response to this?

For husbands, and for church leaders like myself, and other spiritual leaders in our church – home group leaders, preachers, C4K leaders - it means this: take responsibility for the spiritual care of your family, or your group. Lead them spiritually for the sake of order, in a Christ-like way. In the way you pray, the way you read God's word, your commitment to church, the way you give time and money, in the way you speak about others, the way you treat others, the way you care for the poor – in everything – you are **responsible** for Christ-like spiritual leadership.

And for those called to submit – whether to church leadership, or to husbands, or to parents – submit by accepting their direction for the sake of order. But don't submit to just anything. Submit to godly, Christ-like, sacrificial leadership. Submit by accepting the direction of those who lead – as long as they lead by God's word and under Christ's authority.

In our relationships, we need to lead or submit out of reverence for Christ. For the sake of order and peace in our relationships.