

Practicing Headship And Submission

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The joy that a mother experiences when embracing her newly born baby after a painful delivery, is incomprehensible for any man. In spite of the feminist propaganda about "role interchangeability," no man has ever experienced the pain and joy of bringing a baby into this world.

This may explain why my students smiled at me when I told them on Thursday morning, April 27, that "my baby" was born the night before at 9:00 p. m. I told them that to witness the delivery of "my baby" I went to the printer on Wednesday night, so that I could see with my own eyes my new book ***The Christian and Rock Music: A Study of Biblical Principles of Music*** rolling off the bindery. Indeed, I grabbed the first two copies which I held them to my chest and I took them home with me jubilantly. In fact, I brought them up to our bedroom, giving a copy to my wife and placing the other on my bed stand. I felt as if a new member had been added to our family. Indeed, it is a "beautiful baby" because the book looks very attractive and will thrill the soul of those who will take time to read it.

It is impossible for me to explain the joy and exhilaration I experience every time I see a new publication coming into light after many months of painstaking research. Somehow I am tempted to compare it with a mother's joy in bringing a new baby into this world. This latest book on music represents for me nine months of dedicated research during which I spent an average of 15 hours a day investigating, analyzing, and writing.

What has made this latest experience so unique is not only the fact that six professional musicians from different countries have contributed insightful chapters to this symposium, but also the unprecedented number of requests I have received from those of you read the few chapters I posted in our ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER. In fact during the past two weeks we received order for over 6000 copies from all over the world. Within the next few days the first printing of 10,000 copies will be sold out. This has never happened with my previous 14 books. It is evident that many fellow believers are deeply concerned over adoption of pop music and drama for the worship service.

It is evident that an increasing number of fellow believers are not able to see the biblical distinction between sacred music for worship and secular music for entertainment. Our fervent hope and prayer is that this study, fruits of months of dedicated research, will help many sincere persons to understand those biblical principles that should guide Christians in making good musical choices in the home and in the church.

You will be pleased to learn that as of today, May 3, 2000, all your orders have been processed. We have worked almost around the clock to mail you this timely book as soon as possible. Those of you who live in North America will receive your copies within the next few days. Overseas deliveries can take from 6 to 8 weeks.

If you have not yet ordered your copy ***The Christian and Rock Music***, feel free to call us at (616) 471-2915 or to email us your order with your credit card information. For the next few weeks, until May 30, 2000, we will extend the following special offer ONLY to the members of our newsletter:

1 copy for \$20.00, postage paid.

2 copies for \$25.00, postage paid. (The second copy costs only \$5.00).

10 copies for only \$100.00, postage paid.

26 copies (one complete case) for only \$170.00, postage paid.

Please note that we offer a complete case of 26 copies of ***The Christian and Rock Music*** for only \$170, that is, about \$6.00 per copy. We decided to extend this very special offer to make it possible for every member of your church to benefit from this timely study. You can also order the book at my web site: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>. There you can see the attractive cover of the book and access several chapters of the book free of charge. We will do our best to process your order as soon as possible.

REACTIONS TO THE LAST NEWSLETTER

The last newsletter no. 44 on the biblical teachings regarding roles within marriage, generated a considerable volume of responses. While most of your comments were very positive, quite a few were decidedly negative. Surprisingly, some strongly believe that the role distinctions of husband-headship and wife-submission, are the result of the Fall, and have contributed to the abuse of women. To remedy this problem, some messages propose that Christians should abandon functional role distinctions, adopting instead the so-called "partnership paradigm," which is recommended for adoption at the next General Conference Session.

This issue deserves careful consideration, because what is at stake is the very order that God has established for the proper functioning of the family, church, and society at large. Thus I have decided to continue our study, by exploring in this newsletter the practical implications and applications of headship and submission.

Incidentally, this past week I received numerous messages from listeners of Dr. Laura Schlessinger Radio Talk Show. In a recent program she quoted from my book THE MARRIAGE COVENANT and recommended it to her listeners. In fact, she went as far as posting an excerpt of my book dealing with the biblical view of sex, on her web site: <http://www.drlaura.com>. Apparently her program is quite popular, because I received messages from different parts of the country. I wrote her a note of thanks, offering free review copies of several of my books where I deal with lifestyle issues.

PRACTICING HEADSHIP AND SUBMISSION

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In the previous newsletter we have established that egalitarian or partnership view of marriage, adopted by some Adventist scholars and recommended for adoption at the next General Conference Session, is largely based on a misinterpretation of the biblical teachings on husband-headship and wife-submission. The Bible presents these roles within marriage, not as the consequence of the Fall, but as an order established by God at creation to ensure unity and harmony in the home and the church.

To appreciate more fully the validity and value of the divine order of headship and submission, we shall now reflect on the practical implications and applications of such principles in marital relationships.

This study is divided into two parts. The first attempts to define in practical terms what husband-headship entails in terms of leadership and service. The second looks at some practical aspects of a wife-submission to a caring husband.

1. Practicing Headship

Leadership in Love. Paul clarifies the meaning of headship by exhorting husbands not to exercise authority over their wives, but to love them “as Christ loved the church” (Eph 5:25). Putting it differently, Paul exhorts husbands to exercise not a headship of power, control, competence or domination, but a leadership of love. The model is the headship of Christ over the church manifested in His willingness to sacrifice Himself for her sanctification (“that he might sanctify her”—v.26), purification (“having cleansed her”—v.26), and glorification (“that he might present the church to himself in splendor”—v.27).

This is the way I am to be the head of my wife, by loving her with the sacrificial and unconditional love of Jesus. Jesus so loved the church that He gave up everything for her— equality with God, heaven’s majesty and glory, the right to an earthly family, the understanding and appreciation of his fellows, a fair trial and a humane death. This is a headship of total sacrificial and unconditional love, without rights. As a husband, am I the kind of head who is willing to give up everything for the well-being of my wife and children?

Christ’s love cleanses and improves the church. Through His Spirit, Christ works to “present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle” (Eph 5:27). Jesus loves to make every believer as pure and perfect as He is. “Does my love for my wife wash away her inner wounds and hurts and bring out the best in her character? Do I make it easy or difficult for Jesus to make her radiant and blameless? Jesus does not repress and inhibit my character but enables it to flower and realize its full potential. Is my wife suppressed or enriched through my relationship with her?”¹

Should God ask me or you one day, “Did you love your wife unconditionally as I loved you?” What are we going to say? Shall we look for excuses, saying, “Well, Lord, you know that I loved my wife in many areas. I provided for all her material needs and I supported many of her plans and initiatives. But it was difficult to love her completely because she was not always submissive. Sometimes she insisted in doing things her own way, disregarding my feelings or instructions. And remember God, she was not always trustworthy. Sometimes she left me and the kids at home to go out to have fun. How could I love her unconditionally?” The Lord will reply, “I never asked you about your wife’s weaknesses. I asked you, Did you love your wife unconditionally as I love you?”

God knows our spouse’s weaknesses as well as our own. Yet He calls us as husbands to exercise a headship of love by loving our wives no matter what their weaknesses might be. He calls us to exercise our headships by being first in forgiving our spouses’ mistakes, first in nurturing and building our marital relationship, first in

assuming responsibility for the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of our wife and children.

Exercising such a headship of love is not easy. In fact, it is impossible on our own. It can only be done by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul introduces his discussion of the proper relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and servants and masters by exhorting Christians to “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). It is only by the enabling power of His Spirit that a husband *can* begin to love his wife as Christ loved the church and that a wife *can* submit herself to her husband as to the Lord.

Leadership in Service. The husband-headship of sacrificial love is manifested especially through his willingness to serve his wife and children. This does not mean that he is under the authority of his family members or that he takes orders from them. Rather, it means that he serves his family by giving them a loving, intelligent and sensitive *service of leadership*.

Headship in the Scripture presupposes a leadership of service. Christ is the head of the church because He came not to be served by the church, but to serve her (Matt 20:28). There is a radical difference between God’s view and the world’s view of leadership. “You know,” Jesus explained, “that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all” (Mark 10:42-44).

A husband fulfills the headship of service by leading, encouraging, protecting, providing, and caring for his wife and children. As the wife has a unique role in procreation, so the husband has a unique role in provision and protection. “The Lord,” writes Ellen White, “has constituted the husband the head of his wife to be her protector; he is the house-band of the family, binding the members together, even as Christ is the head of the church and the Savior of the mystical body.”² Peter emphasizes this point, saying: “Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1 Pet 3:7, NIV).

The wife is “the weaker partner,” not morally, spiritually or intellectually, but physically. The considerate husband will protect her from such heavy tasks as moving furniture, repairing automobiles, transplanting trees, building fences, doing masonry. Sometimes the husband must protect his wife’s health by taking over some of her burdens. If the wife works outside the home or if she is not well, the considerate husband will alleviate his wife’s burdens by assuming responsibility for some of them.

Speaking of the husband, Ellen White writes, “If he wishes to keep her fresh and gladsome, so that she will be as sunshine in the home, let him help her bear her burdens. His kindness and loving courtesy will be to her a precious encouragement, and the happiness he imparts will bring joy and peace to his own heart.”³ She continues, noting that if a mother is deprived of the care and protection of her husband, “if she is allowed to exhaust her strength through overwork or through anxiety and gloom, her children will be robbed of the vital-force and of the mental elasticity and cheerful buoyancy they should inherit.”⁴

Leadership as Management. An important aspect of the headship of the husband is to provide a caring and competent management to the family. This involves establishing and maintaining directions, setting priorities and delegating responsibilities. In his book *Christian Living in the Home*, Jay Adams writes: “The husband as the head of the home is its manager. He is the head; the head does not do the work of the body. The husband is not to answer every question or think every thought for his wife— exactly not that. Rather, he is to recognize that God gave him a wife to be a helper. A good manager will look at his helper and say, ‘She has certain abilities. If I am going to manage my household well, I must see that every last one of those gifts is developed and put to use

as fully as possible.' He will not want to squash her personality; rather, he will seek to bring it to the fullest flower."⁵

In a well-ordered family a husband exercises his headship by delegating and not by abdicating responsibilities. This involves taking into consideration the ideas, the talents and convictions of his wife and children. Wives are expected to "rule their household" (1 Tim 5:14) by properly managing their homes. The wise woman of Proverbs 31 is emotionally and physically able to work creatively and sacrificially.

"Part of the conflict and confusion which we see in homes today," write Larry and Nordis Christenson, "stems from a too simplistic exercise of headship. To be head of the house means more than a man occupying the captain's quarters and barking out orders. It means learning to shoulder the responsibility for giving informed and intelligent direction to the family. A husband won't have all the good ideas. His wife and children, as well as people from outside the immediate family, may have important things to say about what the family ought to be doing. It is the husband's responsibility to weigh every suggestion, determine what should be done, and see that it happens."⁶

The husband bears a heavy responsibility of the outcome of his decisions. If the family does not gather for worship or does not attend church, God holds the father responsible. If the children are disobedient and rebellious, the father is primarily to blame. It was Eli and not his wife, who came under God's condemnation for raising two evil sons (1 Sam 3:13).

A family without the competent and dedicated leadership of a father is like a corporation without a capable president. In both instances the organization disintegrates very quickly. One of the greatest needs of America today is for husbands and fathers who provide to their families not only financial support but also moral and spiritual leadership.

Leadership as Provider. An important part of the husband's leadership of service is his responsibility to provide his wife and children with food, clothing, shelter and educational opportunities. This is a sacred obligation placed upon the husband by God. "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim 5:8, NIV).

Providing only a living, however, is not enough. A common misconception husbands have goes something like this: "I work hard to provide my wife and children for all their needs. What more could they ask of me?" Or, "My wife has no reasons to complain because she has much more than most women have."

Providing a living for our wives and children is not a valid substitute for sharing our personal lives with them. Our wives marry *us*, not our paychecks. What many wives miss most is not the paycheck, but the personal attention, presence, and fellowship of their husbands. They wait to be noticed, appreciated, and given time. It is the feeling of being neglected that often will tempt a wife to look for another man willing to give her time and attention.

Peter's counsel to husbands is clear: "Be considerate as you live with your wives" (1 Pet 3:7). The Greek verb translated "live" (*sunoiountes*), literally means "being at home with." Just "being at home with" the wife instead of going out with friends, however, is not enough. A husband may be home and yet ignore his wife by being totally absorbed in reading the newspaper or watching a game on television. As the head of his home, a husband must learn to exercise leadership in self-sharing. He must learn to set aside a block of time each day to give undivided attention to his wife and children. The benefits that will accrue from such a practice are beyond estimation.

Leadership in Discipline and Instruction. As the head of the home, the husband must take responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of his family. In the Old Testament, God instructs fathers to be diligent in teaching His commandments to

their children: "These words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut 4:7). A similar exhortation is given to fathers in the New Testament: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4).

The two areas in which a husband must take "first responsibility" is "discipline and instruction." The enforcement of proper discipline is fundamental to the character development of a child. All too often husbands abdicate their responsibility as the moral and spiritual leaders of the home, expecting their wives to fulfill these functions. The result is that more and more wives have to serve as the moral and spiritual heads of the home. When this happens, the children suffer and the marital relationship is strained. The children suffer because they are deprived of the important role model of father as the authority figure and leader of the home. The marital relationship is strained because the wife may resent her husband's inability to function as the moral and spiritual head of the family, and the husband may react to his failure by seeking fulfillment outside the home.

Despite all the anti-male-headship propaganda of the women's libbers, "it is precisely the *absence* of male authority," as Larry and Nordis Christianson point out, "which plagues American families."⁷ We are fast becoming a matriarchal society where women are primarily responsible for teaching and disciplining children, for supporting the family, for maintaining the house, for leading out in worship, and for participating in church and civic affairs.

"The problem," as aptly stated by the Christiansons, "is mass abdication on the part of husbands. The need in American families today is not some kind of manufactured 'equality' between husband and wife. The equality is already there—God-given, waiting to be discovered. The need is for *headship*. Let men accept the responsibility of being head of the family, and wives will find under their authority a freedom, a liberation, such as no constitutional amendment could ever guarantee."⁸

Leadership as Lawmaker and Priest. A Christian father must not betray his sacred trust to be the lawmaker and priest of the home. Ellen White emphasizes this important function, saying: "All members of the family center in the father. He is the lawmaker, illustrating in his own manly bearing the sterner virtues: energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. The father is in one sense the priest of the household, laying upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice. . . he is a laborer together with God, carrying out the gracious designs of God and establishing in his children upright principles, enabling them to form pure and virtuous characters, because he has preoccupied the soul with that which will enable his children to render obedience not only to their earthly parent but also to their heavenly Father."⁹

As husbands we are ultimately responsible for the moral and spiritual development of our families. Children naturally look to their father for moral directions. The larger size, greater strength, and deeper voice of the father bespeak to them of authority and leadership. This is why mothers need the involvement of their husbands in enforcing discipline. Fathers serve as a basis upon which parental authority is constructed.

As fathers we need to be involved in the discipline of our children, watching for power struggles between our wives and children. We must take responsibility for any of our children's behavioral problems that cause emotional stress to our wives. We must take time to communicate with our children in order to find out their moral and spiritual needs. We must serve as the priests of the home by leading the family in a daily worship experience and renewed commitment to Christ. Family worship is the symbolic center of a family's spiritual commitment. By bringing the family together for worship, the husband teaches his family members to look up to God for wisdom and strength and to make God first and supreme in their lives.

Conclusion. Practicing headship, as we have seen, means not to lord over the family by barking out orders to the wife and children but rather to shoulder the responsibility of providing them with a caring and intelligent leadership. This includes a *leadership in loving*, shown by loving our wives with the unconditional and sacrificial love of Jesus; a *leadership in service* manifested in our willingness to give intelligent and sensitive service to our wives and children; a *leadership in the management* of the home shown by our setting priorities and delegating authority; a *leadership in providing* our wives and children not only with food, clothing, and shelter, but also with our personal attention, presence and fellowship; a *leadership in discipline and instruction*, shown by our taking first responsibility in enforcing proper discipline and in providing instruction to the children; a *leadership as lawmaker and priest* manifested in taking responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of our family members. In a word, practicing headship means being willing to serve our family by providing for the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs of our wives and children. This is the kind of headship exemplified by Christ, the model of the husband's headship.

2. Practicing Submission

Few Biblical injunctions can stir up as much emotion and controversy as the command for the wife to submit to her husband (Eph 5:22, 24; Col 3:18, 1 Pet 3:1). Both liberal and evangelical feminists are shocked and offended by this command. They view this command as a basic denial of women's rights to equality with men. To correct this alleged evil, the women's liberation movement is promoting marriages where roleless partners match their career goals. The very titles "husband" or "wife" are obsolete in such marriages. Each spouse has a right to terminate the relationship when it is no longer beneficial to his or her self-fulfillment.

The traditional roles of wife, mother, and homemaker are being deliberately and systematically dismantled, especially through the influence of the Women's Liberation Movement on the public media. James Dobson offers a most graphic description of this process, saying: "The image of women now being depicted by the media is a ridiculous combination of wide-eyed fantasy and feminist propaganda. Today's woman is always shown as gorgeous, of course, but she is more—much more. She roars around the countryside in a racy sports car, while her male companion sits on the other side of the front seat anxiously biting his nails. She exudes self-confidence from the very tip of her fingers, and for good reasons: she could dismantle any man alive with her karate chops and flying kicks to the teeth. She is deadly accurate with a pistol and she plays tennis (or football) like a pro. She speaks in perfectly organized sentences, as though her spontaneous remarks were planned and written by a team of tiny English professors sitting in the back of her pretty head. She is a sexual gourmet, to be sure, but she wouldn't be caught dead in a wedding ceremony. She has the grand good fortune of being perpetually young and she never becomes ill, nor does she ever make a mistake or appear foolish. In short, she is virtually omniscient, except for a curious inability to do anything traditionally feminine, such as cook, sew, or raise children. Truly, today's screen heroine is a remarkable specimen, standing proud and uncompromising, with wide stance and hands on her hips. Oh, yeah! This baby has come a long way, no doubt about that."¹⁰

Have Women Been Really Liberated? A fundamental problem with the Women's Liberation Movement is that it assumes to liberate women by doing away with divine plan for successful marital relationships. The plan consists, as we have seen, of a relationship based on loving leadership and loving submission. Women's libbers reject this divine plan, promoting instead a contractual inter-relationship where each partner is free to come or to go, to live in or to live out.

In their struggle for women's rights, women's libbers, including some evangelical Christians, have made the mistake of absolutizing their own freedom. They have failed to realize that real freedom is to be found, not by becoming centers of absolute will, but by living according to the order of relationships established by God.

The result of the women's liberation movement has been not a greater liberation for women, but a rise in women's frustration, juvenile delinquency, and divorce rate. Elizabeth Achtemeier offers the following perceptive description of the results of feminist ideologies: "Some modern so-called 'liberated' women have absolutized themselves by being so concerned about their own rights that they have trampled over the rights of their husbands and children. There is nothing more tragic these days than those homes in which the marital relationship is being destroyed by feminist ideologies. The wife has suddenly realized that she is an 'incomplete' or 'unfulfilled' person. So she has precipitously rushed out and found a job, or is spending hours in women's meetings, or has abandoned all those little courtesies, amenities, and mutual services which make the life between a husband and wife possible. She has become an absolute center of self-assertion, with no regard for the welfare and feelings of her husband. Marriage is not possible under such circumstances, and it is not surprising that many of the militant feminists are also divorced."¹¹

Finding Life by Losing it. Militant feminists have forgotten Christ's counsel that we find our lives by losing them (Mark 8:35); we find a "better relationship" not by fighting for our rights but by assuming our God-given responsibilities. Biblical faith is concerned not with rights but with responsibilities. A woman who insists on fighting for her rights may eventually end up losing protection, sympathy, love, security, and even her husband.

From a Biblical perspective, we have no rights. All that we have—life, love, forgiveness, freedom, companionship, and salvation—are precious gifts offered to us by our gracious Savior so that we may use them to bless others. This applies to God's command, "Husbands, love your wives" and "Wives, be subject to your husbands" (Eph 5:21, 25). They were given not to secure our rights, but to ensure a harmonious, happy relationship.

"When God said love and submit," writes Don Meredith, "there was *only good* intended! Without love and submission, God cannot meet our 'aloneness' needs. Without love and submission, Christians are divided and the cause of Christ is seemingly thwarted. If I do not submit myself to you in humility, then I am a threat, a discouragement, a source of rejection and judgment in your life. Unless I love you unconditionally, it will be hard for you to submit to me. There are no *agape* relationships without *both* love and submission."¹²

The Model of Submission. Christ is the perfect model of both loving headship and loving submission. Both of these roles function in Christ not as limitations but as opportunities for greater service and blessings. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul exhorts us to follow the example of Christ's submissive attitude to find oneness with God and others: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on the cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil 2:5-11, NIV).

Christ's submissive mental attitude enabled Him not to question his Father's headship or to grasp for equal authority, even though He shared the same divinity of the Father. He did not question the right of His Father to function as His head, nor did He attempt to redefine the notion of headship and submission through a "careful exegesis." Instead, he submitted Himself to the Father by being obedient to the point of death on the cross. The result of Christ's obedience is that the Father exalted Him to the highest honor. Christ's example teaches us that in God's order, submission is the way to glorification. The submission of Christ to the headship of His Father provides us a model to understand the nature and manner of a wife's submission to her husband.

Submission as Loving Response. The headship of a husband consists in providing a sacrificial and loving leadership to his family members. Such a leadership provides the basis for a loving and joyful submission on the part of the wife. The common abuse by men of their headship as a “club” over their wives has led many women to see God’s command to submit as irrational and discriminatory. Some women will submit to their husbands half-heartedly; that is, as a necessary divine requirement rather than as a loving response. They hope that God will reward their unwilling submission. Such legalistic submission is joyless, frustrating, and often results in the dissolution of marriage.

Legalistic submission fails to see that headship and submission were given by God not to deprive us of something but to ensure a happy and harmonious marital relationship. Without loving leadership and loving submission, no successful relationship can be maintained. The fundamental cause of legalistic headship or submission is self-centered, unyielding wills clashing with God’s commands. When by God’s grace the battle of the wills is dissolved, then we are able to accept and experience God’s command to love and submit, not as a source of strife, but of joy, order, blessing, and security. The conflict over roles in marriage is caused not by a mistake in God’s job description of husbands and wives, but by sin, manifested in self-centered, unyielding dispositions.

God’s plan for husbands to be loving, sacrificial heads and for wives to be loving, respectful helpmates is designed to promote not competition and conflicts, but completion and harmony. The two roles can be compared to the lock and the key. If the lock wants to be the key or the key wants to be the lock because either or both of them are unhappy with their assigned roles, both of them become useless. It is only when the lock and the key function as designed that they work properly. In the same way, it is only when husband and wife function as loving head and responsive helpmate, that their marital union will work properly in accordance with God’s design. Each spouse is unfulfilled alone, but together they make a whole.

Submission as Respect. The submission of a wife to her husband is manifested especially through her respect for him. Paul summarizes his exhortation to husbands and wives, saying: “Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph 5:33). Respect is something that must be gained through proper conduct. When a Christian husband exercises a loving, sacrificial headship, his wife finds him worthy of trust, honor, and respect.

Respect is an essential quality of love. If love is to grow through the years, it must be based on mutual respect. In his epistle to Titus, Paul encourages older women to teach younger wives “to love their husbands” (Titus 2:4). The fact that Paul exhorts wives “to respect” their husbands in Ephesians and “to love” them in Titus shows that in the apostle’s mind, love and respect go hand in hand.

A wife can show respect toward her husband in different ways: by accepting and affirming his moral and spiritual leadership in the home; by deferring to him certain decisions, questions, or problems; by admiring and praising him for his achievements; by putting him first when planning activities; by supporting his financial plans. When a man knows that his wife respects, supports, and admires him, no sacrifice will be too great for him.

Submission as Acceptance. The submissive wife accepts her husband the way he is, without conditioning her love to changes in his behavior. We learn to accept and love unconditionally our husbands or our wives by realizing how God accepts us: “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

At times a wife may feel that it is impossible for her to accept her husband the way he is. Humanly speaking this may well be true, but as she accepts and experiences

God's unconditional love, she is empowered to accept and love her husband unconditionally.

In her book, *You Can Be the Wife of a Happy Husband*, Darien Cooper says: "When you accept your husband the way he is, you will give him the freedom to be the man he wants to be. He will have freedom to come and go as he pleases and to make his own decisions. In other words, true love is letting go! Your husband will love you freely as he did when he chose to marry you unless you stifle that love with your possessiveness."¹³

As a plant needs good soil, water, and sun to grow healthy, so a man needs the unconditional love and acceptance of his wife to live a healthy, happy, and satisfying life. When a husband feels that he is constantly on trial, that he has to constantly prove himself worthy to his wife, he becomes discouraged and tempted to look for another woman who will accept him the way he is.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict a person of his or her wrongdoings (John 16:8-11). When we take upon ourselves the job of convicting our spouses of their mistakes, we get in God's way and hinder the work of His Spirit. This does not mean that a wife should ignore her husband's wrongdoing. To do so would be morally irresponsible. The submissive wife can and must express her concerns and views freely. In fact, a mature husband will want her to do so. But once a wife has told her husband in what way she thinks he is wrong, she should not continue to nag him on that matter. Instead, she should place her trust in God's ability to convict and change her husband.

"It might be comforting to realize," rightly observes Darien Cooper, "that negative traits are distorted positive traits. If negative traits can be modified or channeled in the right direction, they can become strengths. Stubbornness can become perseverance. Cowardice can be turned to gentleness. Tactlessness can be turned to frankness. If you trust Jesus Christ to take care of your husband's problems and fix your mind on his assets, you can help him turn bad traits into good ones."¹⁴

Submission as Putting Husband First. As believers, we submit ourselves to Christ by placing Him first in our lives. Our submission to Christ is presented in Ephesians 5:24 as the model of the wife's submission to her husband. When Jesus is first in a woman's life, He will enable her to place her husband first in her thoughts and actions. A man who has the assurance of being first in his wife's life will be able to face challenges with greater courage and self-confidence.

Placing your husband first means avoiding certain negative attitudes and actions. One of these is criticism of your husband's character or performance, especially in front of others. This can hurt him even more than a slap on the face. True "love does not delight in evil but rejoices with truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Cor 13:6-7).

Another negative attitude to avoid is selfishness. A submissive wife will consider her husband's likes or dislikes when purchasing clothes, planning a meal, accepting or rejecting an invitation to a program or social function. Darien Cooper asks wives: "Do you plan your activities so you can stop and visit with him if he should need to talk when he gets home from work? Remember, he can easily tell if he does not have your complete attention when he talks to you. The uninterested look on your face, glancing at the clock or out of the window, or yawning will give you away. Your interest must be sincere."¹⁵

A submissive wife will also avoid jealousy and possessiveness. She will not deny her husband some legitimate pleasures that could draw him away from her. A wife who resents the time consuming career or activities of her husband may be loving herself more than her husband.

Putting your husband first means also centering all your activities around the husband. Good things such as children, homemaking, in-laws, appearance, church or

civic functions can easily get out of balance, controlling the time and interest of a wife. It is therefore essential for a wife to learn to balance her activities in such a way that they are the spokes circling the hub, which is the husband, and not vice versa. If the spokes are well-proportioned and balanced, the wheel, that is, marital life, will roll smoothly. On the contrary, if the spokes are out of adjustment and unbalanced, the wheel will wobble and eventually will smash in pieces.

Putting your husband first means also supporting his financial plans. This may require making the dollar stretch by being thrifty, as described in Proverbs 31:13-14: "She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. She is like the ships of the merchant, she brings her food from afar. She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and tasks for her maidens."

Submission as Role-Acceptance. Headship and submission are roles established by God to ensure order, peace, and harmony in the home. The submissive wife accepts her role as homemaker and mother, finding joy in fulfilling such roles creatively, efficiently, and lovingly.

Radical feminists belittle the role of homemaker and mother, promoting instead the male's roles. For them, the only life worth living is a man's life. To be successful, a woman must strive to achieve the attributes, goals, and performances of a man. In their striving to be like men, women are in danger of losing their feminine qualities which make them attractive to men. Women who become hard and aggressive in competing with men often discover to their sorrow that they are treated as if they were men. Competition damages something which is basic and precious to a right relationship between men and women.

Our families, churches, and societies need women who are willing to accept their vital role as wives, homemakers, and mothers. God has equipped women with unique biological and spiritual resources needed for the survival and growth of the home. Biologically, God has endowed every woman with the marvelous capacity to conceive and nourish human life in her womb. Spiritually, God has endowed every woman who becomes a mother with the unique power to mold her children's characters for time and eternity.

A woman who willingly and joyfully accepts her role of wife, mother, and homemaker can experience greater reward and fulfillment than any academic or business career can provide. No greater joy and satisfaction can come to a woman than to have her children rising up and calling her "blessed" and her husband praising her, saying: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all" (Prov 31:28-29).

Submission as Acceptance of the Husband's Leadership. God's order for the home is for the husband to serve as a loving leader and for the wife to accept his leadership (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23). This order has been divinely established to ensure harmony, happiness, and protection. A home with two heads or with the wife as the head is an abnormality because it distorts the distinctive male-female roles.

"As homes have become more wife-dominated," writes Darien Cooper, "there has been a rise in juvenile delinquency, rebellion, homosexuality, the divorce rate, and the number of frustrated women because the home was designed by God to run efficiently with the man as the leader. Ignoring this principle of his leadership or devising substitutes creates untold problems."¹⁶

The wife who accepts and responds to her husband's leadership finds protection and satisfaction in the role God designed for her. She enjoys freedom from pressures and problems she is not supposed to carry. A major concern of my wife when I am away from home is that she may have to deal with some unexpected problems that I usually handle: a burned water pump, a stalled furnace, malfunctioning air-conditioning, leaking faucets or roofs, flat tires, disciplining children. It is reassuring for her to know that "I am around" to take care of such unexpected problems. This gives her peace of mind and freedom to

pursue her various activities which do not conflict with her role of wife and mother. By accepting my leadership in the home, my wife is relieved of many worries while I am challenged to develop my God-given strengths and abilities.

Submission Is Not Slavery. A Christian woman, who by God's enabling grace submits to her husband, is not in danger of becoming a slave. On the contrary, she may discover that her submissive attitude inspires her husband to be more thoughtful and kind toward her. Usually, a submissive wife enjoys a happier relationship with her husband than does a dominating wife. She will certainly enjoy a closer walk with God when she knows that she obeys God's command by being submissive to her husband than when she disobeys God by dominating her husband.

Domineering wives have caused great misery to themselves and to their partners. A woman who is aggressive and dominates her husband in the early years of marriage may discover to her disappointment that later in life, she will loathe the man she has trained to be submissive to her because she has no one to lean upon.

Submission does not mean that a woman cannot voice her opinion. Rather, it means that she will speak "the truth in love" (Eph 4:15) and comply with her husband's decisions to the best of her abilities. "Always remember," writes Tim LaHaye, "you reap far more than you sow. If you sow submission in obedience to God, you will reap blessings in abundance; if you sow rebellion in disobedience to the will of God, you will reap abundant misery."¹⁷

CONCLUSION

The rejection of the Biblical view of role distinction within marriages is a major cause of marriage break ups today. Scripture clearly presents the headship of the husband and the submission of the wife as an order established by God to ensure unity and harmony in the home. Practicing headship does not mean lording over the wife or family members but rather providing a caring leadership which ensures the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual needs of our wives and children. Similarly, practicing submission does not mean serving the husband as a slave but rather willingly and joyfully to accept the husband's loving leadership.

The fact that God has given a different roles for husbands and wives to fulfill does not mean that one is inferior to the other. Each role is equal in importance though different in function. The role of a husband complements that of a wife as a key complements a lock. Either is incomplete without the other. Respecting the husband/wife role distinctions is essential to ensuring the stability of the marriage covenant.

ENDNOTES

1. David Phypers, *Christian Marriage in Crisis* (Whitstable, Kent, England, 1985), p. 23.
2. Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 215.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 218
4. *Ibid.*
5. Jay Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Grand Rapids, 1972), p. 77.
6. Larry and Nordis Christianson, *The Christian Couple* (Minneapolis, 1977), p. 151.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 158
8. *Ibid.*, p. 159
9. Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 212.
10. James C. Dobson, *Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives* (Dallas, 1984), p.153.
11. Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Committed Marriage* (Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 97-98.
12. Don Meredith, *Becoming One* (Nashville, no date), p. 120
13. Darien B. Cooper, *You Can Be the Wife of a Happy Husband* (Wheaton, Illinois, 1978), p. 29.
14. *Ibid.*, p.35
15. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 58
17. Tim LaHaye, *How to Be Happy Though Married* (Wheaton, Illinois, 1968), p. 109

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON: APRIL 29-MAY 5 “SALVATION AND THE SECOND ADVENT”

A PERSONAL NOTE: The following comments are designed to expand the theme of this week Sabbath School lesson, by helping you understand more fully the relationship between the salvation accomplished at the First Advent and the consummation to be realized at the Second Advent. My comments focus on the unity that exists in the New Testament between the two events.

How does the New Testament understand the relationship between the “already” fulfilled salvation of the First Advent and its “not-yet” consummation of the Second Advent? Are these two events viewed as being temporally and functionally distinct and separated from one another? Or are they regarded as being essentially united and continuous?

The New Testament offers ample and explicit indications that the salvation accomplished at the First Advent and its consummation to be realized at the Second Advent, are in a real sense two manifestations of the same event: the Advent of the Lord. The First Coming of Christ represents the guarantee of the certainty of His Second Coming. This assurance was given to the disciples at the time of Christ’s ascension: “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

1. Unity in the Vocabulary of the Blessed Hope

The redemptive unity existing between the fulfillment of salvation at the First Advent and its consummation at the Second Advent is well-expressed in Hebrews 9:28: “Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” This sense of unity between the First and Second Advents is exemplified especially by the vocabulary of the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13), namely through the three terms Parousia, Revelation, and Appearing.

Parousia. The first word, Parousia, is a Greek term which is translated “coming,” “arrival,” or “presence.” Note that this term is used in the New Testament to refer both to Christ’s First Advent (2 Pet. 1:16) and to His Second Advent (1 Thess 3:13; 4:15; James 5:7,8; 1 John 2:28).

Revelation. Similarly, the second term, Revelation (a translation of the Greek apokalypsis) is used to describe both the present disclosures of Christ (Rev 1:1; Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 14::26) and His future revelation at His Second Advent (2 Thess 1:7 1 Pet 1:7, 13; 4:13; 1 Cor 1:7).

Appearing. The third term, Appearing (in Greek epiphaneia), like the previous two, denotes in the New Testament both the present, invisible manifestation (Titus 2:11; 3:4; 2 Tim 1:10) and the future, visible appearing of Christ at His Parousia (2 Thess 2:8; 1 John 2:28). The two meanings occur together in Titus 2:11-13: “For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

The dual meaning attached to these three words indicates that for New Testament believers the future Advent was intensely felt in the present, daily living. The expectation of the future glorious Appearing, Revelation, and Parousia of Christ was regarded as the culmination and consummation of the present experience of His invisible presence.

2. Unity in the Fulfillment of the Old Testament Hope

Another significant indication of the sense of unity between the First and Second Advents can be seen in the New Testament understanding of the fulfillment of the Old

Testament Advent Hope, which looked for the realization of at least three major events: the judgment upon the sinners, the blessing of the faithful, and the destruction of evil powers followed by the renewal of this world. It is noteworthy that each of these aspects of the Old Testament hope is seen in the New Testament as fulfilled initially at Christ's First Advent and ultimately at His Second Advent.

Final Judgment. The final judgment upon human disobedience is enacted through Christ's life and death on the Cross (John 5:24; 12:31; 9:39; 3:19; Mark 10:45), yet God has appointed a future time "on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed" (Acts 17:31; cf. 2; Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10).

Final Blessings. Similarly, the final blessing of life is bestowed upon the faithful through the First Advent of Christ who "abolished death and brought life and immortality" (2 Tim 1:10; cf. John 10:10; 17:3; 11:26), yet it is at His Second Advent that our mortal nature will put on immortality (1 Cor 15:53).

Final Destruction. In the same way, the final subjugation of evil powers and the accompanying new creation occurred already at Christ's First Coming through the manifestation of God's sovereignty over disorder and disease (Luke 10:17-18; Col 2:15; Mark 3:23-27; Eph 1:20-23; 2 Cor 5:17), yet the destruction of the wicked and the reward of the believers will take place at the Second Coming of the Son of Man (Matt 25:31-45; 1 Cor 15:24).

D-Day and V-Day. Oscar Cullman offers a fitting military example to illustrate the close connection existing between the First and Second Advents.⁴ A decisive battle (D-day) may have been won in the early stage of a war, yet the war will continue for an indefinite time until "Victory Day" (V-day). D-day represents the decisive defeat inflicted on the enemy by Christ at His First Coming. V-day represents the final surrender of the enemy and celebration of victory at Christ's Second Coming. The Christian hope of the final victory at the Second Advent is nourished by the unshakable assurance that the decisive battle has already been won by Christ at His First Advent (Col 2:15).

These examples show the existence in the New Testament of an underlying conceptual unity between the First and Second Advents, both of which are in turn seen as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Advent Hope. Thus, we might say that ultimately, the unity between the First and Second Advents is reflective of the larger unity existing between the Old and New Testaments' understanding of the Advent Hope.

3. Unity Through the Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Several factors enabled New Testament believers to express and experience a profound sense of unity between the present and the future, the First and Second Advents. A most important factor was the ministry of the Holy Spirit who served not only to usher in the new age at Pentecost—the "last days" predicted by the prophets (Acts 2:16-17)—but also to offer believers assurance and a foretaste of the blessings of the age to come.

In the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit, called Counselor, bridges the gulf between the Departure and Return of Christ (John 14:16-17). His function is to act as Christ's representative, counseling, comforting, teaching, bringing things to remembrance, guiding into all the truth, declaring things to come (John 14:26; 16:13-14).

Anticipation of the Future. Paul underscores the vital function of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to experience in the present an anticipation of the future age. "For Paul," writes Anthony A. Hoekema, "the Spirit means the breaking in of the future into the present, so that the powers, privileges, and blessings of the future age are already available to us through the Spirit." This actualizing, contemporizing of the future in the present life of the believer is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in several ways.

The Spirit first of all assures us of our divine sonship and thus of our future inheritance to be received at the Parousia (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-5; Eph 1:14). Through the Spirit we receive the first fruits of God's harvest, that is to say, we experience the beginning of the great harvest to come at the Second Advent when we will receive "the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23). The Holy Spirit offers us the guarantee of the ultimate consummation of our salvation at Christ's Coming (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14).

The Spirit functions in our lives as a seal which marks us as God's possession and thus preserves us unto "the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30; cf. 1:13; 2 Cor 1:22). Through the Spirit we taste "the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:5). The indwelling Spirit assures us that "he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you" (Rom 8:11). "Because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit," Paul writes, "hope does not disappoint us" (Rom 5:5).

Uncertainty of the Future. These various functions of the Holy Spirit point to a common goal, namely, to help the believer experience in the present the certainty and a foretaste of greater future blessings to be received at the Second Advent. The uncertainty felt by many today regarding the reality of the Advent Hope and of the future eternal life may well reflect to a large degree the absence of the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Divine realities are grasped not through mere intellectual reasoning, but through the reception and illumination of the Holy Spirit. As Paul explains, "we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God, . . . The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:12,14).

4. Unity Through the Heavenly Ministry of Christ

Counselor. Another significant factor which enabled New Testament believers to conceptualize the experience the unity between the First and the Second Advents, was their confidence in the heavenly ministry of Christ. The latter is, in a sense, closely related to the ministry of the Spirit upon the earth. This is suggested, for example, by the fact that both Christ and the Spirit are called "Parakletos" (Advocate, Counselor—1 John 2:1; John 14:16, 26; 15:26) and that both are said to intercede for us (Rom 8:26, 34; Heb 7:25). The Holy Spirit mediates to the believers upon the earth the benefits of Christ's heavenly ministry (John 15:26; 16:13-14; Acts 2:33).

Intercessor. It is noteworthy that the interim period between the Ascension and the Parousia is viewed in the New Testament, not as Christ's leave-of-absence or inactivity, but rather as a time of intense activity at the right hand of God on behalf of believers. The Savior's heavenly ministry is described by such human analogies as "priest" (Heb 7:15; 8:4; 10:21), "high priest" (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11), "mediator" (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), and "intercessor" (Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:1; Heb 6:20; 7:25; 9:24).

These analogies indicate that the function of Christ's heavenly ministry at "the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb 9:24) is essentially redemptive. As expressed in Hebrews 7:25, "He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."

Bridging the Gulf. Our immediate concern, however, is not to explore the nature of Christ's heavenly ministry—though it is a vital study which is largely neglected in contemporary theology—but rather to note how confidence in the heavenly ministry of Christ serves to bridge the gulf between the First and Second Advents, and thus to reveal the sense of unity, continuity, and progression in unfolding of redemption.

Hebrews 9 offers a good example. Here Christ's present appearance "in the presence of God on our behalf" (v. 24) is associated with the fact that in the past He "appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (v. 26) and with the hope that in the future He "will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (v. 28).

One can hardly miss the underlying sense of unity and continuity among Christ's past appearance for us on earth, His present appearance on our behalf in heaven, and His future appearance again on this earth to consummate His redemptive mission. As noted by Dale Moody, Christ's "present appearance in heaven fills with meaning the time between the two appearances in history. The interim is no vacuum."

It is the assurance of Christ's present ministry in heaven that gives us reason to hope that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6). Through Christ, who "intercedes for us" (Rom 8:34), "we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God" (Rom 5:2). In other words, it is Christ's present heavenly ministry that gives us access to God (cf. 1 Pet 3:18) and reason to hope in a future sharing of God's glory at the Second Advent.

Link between Redemption and Restoration. In his speeches delivered at the time of Pentecost, Peter sounds the same note of assurance. He proclaims the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to be the proof of the exaltation and installation of Christ in His heavenly ministry (Acts 2:33; cf. Luke 22:69). Peter speaks of the heavenly ministry of Jesus as the interim period between the redemption already accomplished by Christ's coming into this world and the final restoration to be realized by His Return "What God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, . . . that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old" (Acts 3:18-21).

The author of Hebrews appeals to the believers' "confidence" in Christ's heavenly ministry on their behalf, to urge them to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, . . . all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb 10:19-25). These examples provide unmistakable evidence that confidence in the heavenly ministry of Jesus enabled New Testament believers to conceptualize the experience a profound sense of unity between the Redeemer who had come and the Restorer who was to come.

The temporal distance or waiting time between the First and Second Advents was, as it were, shortened for New Testament believers by their confidence that Christ was actively working in heaven to bring to consummation the redemption already accomplished on this earth. It is the lack of this confidence in Christ's heavenly ministry that accounts to a large degree for the uncertainty many Christians feel regarding the reality of Christ's Return. If the heavenly ministry of Jesus, which is the link that joins together the First and Second Advents, is broken, it is hardly possible to keep alive one's faith and hope in a soon-Coming Savior.

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