

THE ROLE OF MAN AND WOMAN:  
DEFENDING GOD'S ROLES IN MARRIAGE AGAINST THE ATTACKS OF THE DEVIL  
IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

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## **Abstract**

With our society continuing to become more “gender-neutral” many influences are attacking the foundation of the roles God has established for man and woman in marriage. While some of these influences merely challenge “traditional” gender roles of what jobs, duties or functions a husband/man carries out in the family and what jobs, duties or functions a wife/woman carries out, they are not against what Scripture says. Scripture allows us freedom in these matters. At the same time other influences are attacking the God-given roles for a man and woman in marriage. These attacks are seeking to rewrite, redefine or eliminate the biblical roles that God has established for man and woman in marriage. This thesis will look at the biblical roles God has given for man and woman in marriage, challenges to God’s established roles in marriage, and how the biblical roles can be defended and applied by Christian husbands and wives living in a changing world.

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## Introduction

I don't think many would argue that the Cleaver<sup>1</sup> style home, a family with two married parents, a suburban home, two children, a father who works, and a mother who stays home to cook the meals and manage the kids, is no longer viewed as a normal American household. Much has changed merely because of changes in our society, causing many to view this structure of family as old-fashioned and outdated.

The attitude that any marriage can last more than a handful of years is a novelty. Television shows like *The Insider*, *Inside Edition*, and *E! News* have designated spots during the telecast that detail the gossip of the affairs of various couples in the public eye, who are headed for marriage break-ups. Instead of viewing marriage as a blessing from God for a man and a woman, marriage is often viewed as a burden, too binding or quaint; in short an old-fashioned idea.

These and other factors affect the way the world looks at the traditional roles long associated with marriage. The traditional norms for what is a "man's" job<sup>2</sup> and what is a "woman's" are no longer traditional. Unfortunately with gender norms<sup>3</sup> becoming less established, many have not only changed those duties that man and woman perform in the home, but have also tried to redefine or adjust the order that God has established in his Word.

With many voices clamoring that God's roles for man and woman are no longer valid, how do Christian men and women fulfill God's roles in marriage, while at the same time realizing that "normal" gender roles are no longer the norm?

This thesis will look at some of the influences that are attacking God's roles for a man and woman in marriage and trying to change what God says. It will do this by presenting an overview of those attacks. The thesis is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all the attacks on God's marriage roles, nor will it be an in-depth look at each of those attacks. It does seek to point how the attacks attempt to change the definition of God's roles for man and woman in marriage.

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to the Cleaver family from *Leave it to Beaver*, a sitcom that ran on CBS and ABC from 1957-1961, which followed June and Ward Cleaver and their sons Theodore (Beaver) and Wally.

<sup>2</sup> Job or duty is used to distinguish things that are done in marriage, not the roles that God gives in his Word.

<sup>3</sup> Merely differences in what society views in association with what it means to be a "man" or "woman"

This thesis will look at the marriage roles God has given to husband and wife in his Word. It will do this by looking at sections from the Bible where God establishes his roles for marriage and where he confirms and reconfirms those roles.

This thesis will answer the questions: “Are WELS<sup>4</sup> couples struggling with their roles?” and “How are WELS couples doing in applying God’s roles for them in their marriages?” It will evaluate research gathered from literature and surveys from WELS couples and WELS<sup>5</sup> pastors. Information gathered from that research will help come to a conclusion about those questions.

This thesis will suggest advice and counsel that can be used to help husbands and wives apply God’s roles in their marriages. It will offer direction for husbands and wives in understanding their God-given roles, show the blessings God provides in those roles, and demonstrate how important communication is to the function of those roles in their home or family dynamic.

### **Understanding the Problem**

There are many facets to any issue that deals with God’s Word or marriage. It should come as no surprise that there is a wealth of literature in the area of marriage roles and what the Bible “says” about those roles.

The problem of the role of man and woman in marriage really comes down to two issues: 1) What does a group feel about what God has said about marriage roles in the Bible? 2) How does a group apply what God says?

One group, the Complementarians,<sup>6</sup> seeks to apply God’s roles as he has stated them for us in his Word. This group is considered traditional or conservative in nature because it holds to the clear scriptural roles that God has given to us in Scripture. This group uses biblical terms such as headship, authority and leadership to describe the biblical role of man, while using the biblical terms of helper, help-mate and submission to describe the biblical role of woman.

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<sup>4</sup> Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod couples were chosen to participate in the research that was involved. Therefore the scope of the question has to be narrow.

<sup>5</sup> Only Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod pastors were surveyed for their insights into this issue.

<sup>6</sup> WELS is grouped in with this category.

Another group, Egalitarians (also known as Biblical Feminists), stand on the platform of equality without hierarchy. They focus on biblical evidence to show that man and woman were created equal not only in status before God, but also in role.

The final group, Radical Feminists, includes many branches of the radical feminist movement which extends to a large section of society. This group believes the solution to bringing true equality to man and woman inside and outside of marriage is to get rid of the Bible and its roles all together.

The first section of the thesis, *Challenges to the Biblical Role of Man and Woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, deals with the challenges Egalitarians and Radical Feminists pose to God's roles in marriage as he provided them for us in his Word.

### **Challenges to the Biblical Role of Man and Woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

To begin to understand the problem of why Christian men and women may be having trouble fulfilling their roles in marriage, one has to understand the many attacks on the biblical role of man and woman that are all around us. One must understand that sin is at the very core of all of the attacks. The devil is always at work trying to get a foothold in our lives so that we might begin to doubt God and his love for us and seek to go our own way. The devil uses whatever tools he can in order to shake our faith in God. One of the tools in his arsenal is to attack God's roles for man and woman. In this section, we will examine some of the attacks the devil and his followers use to try to get us to doubt God's love for us and abandon his commands.

### **Feminism**

A major attack on the roles of man and woman is feminism. While feminism has made some very positive improvements in the lives of women, the latest wave of feminism has prompted many women to look to themselves, their own wants, needs and desires to find fulfillment and happiness, rather than looking to what God has said and finding fulfillment in him.

The Feminist Movement, begun in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but reaching prominence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focuses on bringing equal rights to women.

There are two main waves of the feminist movement. Each wave is unique in what it was trying to accomplish and how Christians view it.

The first wave of feminism began in the 1850's and 60's. In his book *Feminism*, Nathan Pope calls this wave of feminism Equity Feminism.<sup>7</sup>

Peter De Jong and Donald Wilson explain the reasons why women began to look for equality during this first wave of feminism.

Before the Industrial Revolution much of society was rural and agricultural in nature. Two-thirds of the nation's workforce was involved in farming.<sup>8</sup> In this agricultural society, a woman's job was filled with tasks in order for the house, home and family business to keep moving forward. She was as much of a business associate as a companion and performed many tasks from the laundry and cooking, to making medicines and clothes.<sup>9</sup>

Nathan Pope also mentions the change from home-based to service-based industry.

With the advent of industrialization many of the tasks that the women were involved with gradually transferred to bakeries and clothing manufacturers, banks and pharmacies.<sup>10</sup>

With this new workforce of women came more influence by women. They began to fight for fairer treatment in the workforce, better wages and better work environments. These demands eventually led to strikes and collective bargaining by the women.

In the 1860's, during the Civil War, women began to play a part in the abolition of slavery. They began to see equality not only as a color issue, but also a gender one. They saw that there were many similarities between slaves looking for equality and their own fight for equality. Many women began to seek equality in the areas of voting privileges and education as well as the labor force.

Out of this first wave of feminism came improvements for women in the labor force, voting rights and education.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Nathan R. Pope, *Feminism: Understanding and Balancing Its Impact on Marriage, Family, and Church, Impact Series* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2003), 6.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 57-71 as cited by Peter DeJong and Donald Wilson, *Husband and Wife* (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI. 1979), 13-14.

<sup>9</sup> Peter De Jong & Donald Wilson, *Husband & Wife: The Sexes in Scripture and Society* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 14.

<sup>10</sup> DeJong and Wilson, *Husband and Wife*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 6

There is much in this wave of feminism that has been very good for our society. As a country we have benefited from these changes. Many of these changes shape our lives today. One cannot imagine a world where women do not have the right to attend high school or college, where women are excluded from politics or from a job merely because they are women, or where women cannot buy and sell land and goods in the same way that a man can. For the people at that time, these reforms of Equity Feminism were shocking, different and even a little scary. However to us, living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century these reforms are normal parts of life. <sup>12</sup>

A Christian would look at this first wave of feminism and agree that many of these improvements and freedoms are God-pleasing. God created women with many abilities and talents. With these reforms women were better able to put those abilities and talents to work.

While Equity Feminism was a fight for women to have the same rights as men in several specific areas of life, the second wave of feminism is different in its tone and what it is trying to accomplish. It wants more than to be equal with men. Pope calls this second wave of feminism Cultural/Gender Feminism. <sup>13</sup>

This form of feminism came to prominence in 1963 with the release of Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*. In this book, Friedan sums up the need for a woman to want and even need more in her life in this way:

If I am right, the problem which has no name stirring in the minds of so many American women today is not a matter of loss of femininity.....It may well be the key to the future of our nation as a nation and a culture. We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: "I want something more than my husband and my children and my home."<sup>14</sup>

Friedan goes further, arguing that women have lost themselves in their duties as mother and wife and have made a prison for themselves.

It is not possible to preserve one's identity by adjusting for any length of time to a frame of reference that is in itself destructive to it. It is very hard indeed for a human being to sustain such an "inner" split -- conforming outwardly to one reality, while trying to maintain inwardly the values it denies. The comfortable concentration camp that women have walked into, or have been talked into by others, is just such a reality, a frame of reference that denies woman's adult human identity.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Norton, 1974), 32.

<sup>15</sup> Friedan, *Mystique*, 308.



Friedan's book sparked a women's rights movement.<sup>16</sup> Activists in this push for the rights of woman began to move further from the thoughts of being equal with men (which had once been the goal) to a new thought of changing society in order to place more focus on women.<sup>17</sup> This changing society focuses on overcoming the norms of the world to put forth a new norm where women become more important than men.<sup>18</sup>

Feminists who began to move away from the mainstream equality message and toward the more radical ideas were given the name Radical Feminists.<sup>19</sup> Nathan Pope says of these Radical Feminists:

Radical feminism, consequently, offers women alternative structures to conventional, traditional, male-dominated ones. Practically speaking, this often means advocating the creation of all-female communities where men have no function or importance. Radical Feminism, in many cases, calls for mutual segregation on the part of women over against men.<sup>20</sup>

Rebecca Groothuis points out the radical foundation of the modern feminist movement: "The roots of modern feminism are in the social upheaval and political leftism that characterized the 1960's."<sup>21</sup>

After taking a close look at this radical form of feminism, Christians would not identify with much, if anything in this second wave. Donald Bloesch points out that for a radical feminist, authority does not lie in Scripture, but in other things. "Authority in the feminist perspective is rooted primarily in the human experience, particularly the feminist experience, over Scripture. The social sciences are seen to have as much authority as sacred tradition."<sup>22</sup>

Pope contrasts the two waves of feminism, "While the [Equality Feminist] of the 19<sup>th</sup> century wanted equality with men, [the Gender/Cultural Feminist] wants superiority over men and to be free from them."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 10,11.

<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War between Traditionalism and Feminism* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1994), 71.

<sup>19</sup> DeJong, Wilson, *Husband Wife*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Myra Marx Fereee and Beth B. Hess, *Controversy and Coalition* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994) as cited by Pope *Feminism*, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Groothuis, *Women in Conflict*, 46.

<sup>22</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *Is the Bible Sexist?: Beyond Feminism and Patriarchalism* (Westchester, Ill: Crossway Books, 1982).

<sup>23</sup> Pope *Feminism*, 7.

God did not create man and woman to war against one another. A Christian would be hard-pressed to justify following and supporting a radical form of feminism, while knowing the direction and purpose God gives us in the Bible.

Out of these two waves of feminism have come many brands of feminism. The brands can be very different in nature from one another. While some of these brands may not be contrary to the Bible in their aims or goals, we need to be on guard because other radical brands of feminism clearly stand in opposition to God. These radical branches hold real dangers to us and our faith.

We need to be aware that much of this current, second wave of feminism in America is anti-Christian. Those in this wave paint the Bible as an enemy of women.

A common tactic is to claim that the Biblical writers were wrong; that the Bible was not written by God, but by men in the church who wanted to keep women in a subordinate place.<sup>24</sup>

This sort of bold claim allows feminists to dismiss the Bible and its teachings as anti-woman. They claim that the Bible is outdated and its ideas no longer relevant. They also make the claim the Bible is full of content that is sexist or chauvinistic.<sup>25</sup> We will look at some of these attacks on the Bible later in the thesis.

While Christians, who believe in the Biblical roles of man and woman, may quickly dismiss these arguments, it is important to understand that these attacks are not coming from one small group of radical women. Over the years these ideas of feminism have become a part of our society.

In a 1986 Gallup poll, 56% of women interviewed identified themselves as feminists.<sup>26</sup> Fifteen years later, in 2001, a similar poll showed that only 25% identified themselves as feminists.<sup>27</sup> Why the dramatic change in numbers?

There were three conclusions for the change found in this poll. First, the public has become somewhat less willing to accept the "feminist" label over the last 30 years. Second, most

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<sup>24</sup> Evangelical Colloquium on Women and the Bible, Alvera Mickelson ed. *Women, Authority & the Bible* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1986), pg. 42-43.

<sup>25</sup> Mickelson, *Women*, 43-44.

<sup>26</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Jennifer Robison, "Feminism -- What's in a Name?," September 3, 2002, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/6715/Feminism-Whats-Name.aspx>.

Americans indicate support for general feminist ideals. Finally, many of these ideals have become so common in American culture that they aren't considered feminist anymore.<sup>28</sup>

As the Gallup Poll concluded, feminist ideas have become part of the fabric of our nation. The attacks of the radical feminist movement are just as numerous and dangerous as they were a decade or two ago. Prominent people in government and politics, especially women, consider themselves to be feminists. One of the articles reviewed for this thesis is entitled *How Did Hillary Fall into the Feminist Fold?*<sup>29</sup> The article focuses on the feminist leanings of then presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton. Gloria Alred, a noted lawyer who has taken on many high profile cases for women's rights, identifies herself as a feminist, going so far as to say, "If you are not a feminist, you are a bigot."<sup>30</sup> Many believe that presidential candidate Mitt Romney lost the 2012 election, in part, because of the backlash by women's rights groups opposed to his pro-life stance on abortion. Many of these women's groups adhere to the radical form of feminism.

One of the reasons the role of man and woman in marriage is so often called into question is because of the mixture of these two waves of feminism. While Christians use the Bible to draw a distinction between Equality Feminism and Radical Feminism, we do have to realize that the second wave is built on the foundation of the first. Groothuis notes the similarities between the two waves of feminism.

1. The idea of woman as an individual; she is her own person
2. She does not need a man for her value or identity
3. Equality established through social change by law and social customs
4. Strong resistance to the thought that a woman's only fulfillment is in motherhood
5. Strong resistance to the thought that a woman's place is in the home under her husband
6. Women are urged to take part in political and social change<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Robison, *Name*.

<sup>29</sup> Carey Roberts. "How Did Hillary Fall into the Feminist Fold?" *Renew America*. Last modified January 2, 2008. Accessed November 11, 2013. <http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/roberts/080102>.

<sup>30</sup> "Gloria Allred | Feminist Attorney." *Big Think*. Accessed November 12, 2013. <http://bigthink.com/users/gloriaallred>.

<sup>31</sup> Groothuis, *Women in Conflict*, 44.

When the devil finds an effective tool to attack God’s Word he does not let go so easily. The sinful temptation for a woman to step out of God’s role goes back to Eden. While we may not see or feel the direct attacks in our circles of life or the direct rhetoric of feminism that was so pronounced even a few decades ago, we should not be fooled; feminist ideas are very much a part of contemporary society. Even the more radical end of the feminist spectrum bleeds into other areas of society and begins to influence our thinking. This radical form of feminism attacks the roles that God has set up for marriage in his Word. By using language that focuses woman on their own selfish desires, it points them to what they want, what would make them feel good, rather than focusing on finding true peace and joy in selflessly serving their God in the best interests of their family.

### **Patriarchalism**

Patriarchalism is the antithesis of feminism. If feminism is one end of the spectrum, where females dominate, patriarchalism is the other end of the spectrum, where men dominate everything.

This view of patriarchalism, or male dominance, can be just as dangerous to the role of man and woman in marriage as feminism and is equally un-biblical.

Feminism holds that the Bible teaches patriarchalism, giving credit to its male language for creating a society that turns men into chauvinists, sexists, rapists and abusers.<sup>32</sup>

Groothuis says this about patriarchalism and how it relates to female dominance, “The most helpful insight of modern feminism is that patriarchy – that is, culturally rather than legally instituted male domination of woman—is at the root of women’s traditionally subordinate place in society.”<sup>33</sup>

Patriarchalism is male chauvinism and sexism put into practice. Patriarchalism seeks to have women be subservient to men and allows men to keep them in that role by force if necessary. Axioms such as, “Woman should be barefoot and pregnant.” “A woman’s place is in

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<sup>32</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 12-14.

<sup>33</sup> Groothuis, *Women*, 65.

the kitchen.” “I am the man. I make the decisions.” or “That is woman’s work” would be common ideals of those who follow this ideology.<sup>34</sup>

Bloesch says, “Patriarchalists...often interpret [*a husband’s leadership*] in a way that the wife is relegated to the status of a charge and therefore cannot be a genuine helpmate. The wife’s obligation is to be entirely at the disposal of her husband.”<sup>35</sup>

There is certainly evidence to support the claim that some men, even Christian men, can sin by mistreating their wives in the name of “authority” or “headship.” In no way does God set up a dictatorship in Scripture with his commands that husbands should love their wives “as Christ loved the church.”

Yet, husbands can and often do sin in this way by taking the “headship” principle and applying it in a sinful way. Husbands can be overbearing or too demanding in their expectations of their wives. They can be thoughtless in their decision making, not seeking the input of their wives, making all the decisions themselves. They can claim biblical authority in matters where Christ has not given that authority and even abuse their wives in word and action.

As in feminism, selfishness lies at the heart of patriarchalism as well. Men who treat women this way are fulfilling their own sinful desires rather than finding true peace and happiness in selflessly serving their God and their wives.

Donald Bloesch points out the dangers of a selfish, me first attitude, in both feminism and patriarchalism that lead to sin when husband and wife do not follow God’s roles for marriage in their life:

Neither feminism nor patriarchalism, as traditionally conceived, does justice to the deepest insights of biblical revelation. Both have a decidedly anthropocentric<sup>36</sup> rather than a theocentric<sup>37</sup> orientation: that is to say, both are oriented around the fulfillment of the self rather than service in the kingdom of God. In the case of patriarchalism, the accent is on the success of the husband. In the case of feminism, the emphasis is on the fulfillment of [her] personhood.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Bloesch, *Bible Sexist?*, 11,12.

<sup>35</sup> Bloesch, *Bible Sexist?*, 22.

<sup>36</sup> A me first attitude where a person looks to their own needs without regards for the needs of another.

<sup>37</sup> A bible first attitude, where a person looks to God’s Word for answer and directions in their lives.

<sup>38</sup> Bloesch, *Bible Sexist?*, 22.

## The Media

One of the areas of society that has been influenced by feminism is the media. The media is a very valuable tool for the devil to use. Often what is seen on television, heard on the radio, or read in the newspaper is believed without thought about bias. Much has been written in the past decade about the danger of media bias.

There always will be bias in the media. Someone makes decisions on how a character will act on a television show or movie. A news editor will have the last word on how the news is reported. We need to be aware of these biases that can influence how we think and feel about a subject.

In recent years, television shows and sitcoms have changed how they depict men and women, especially in a family. Programs often show the husband as an unintelligent brute who bumbles and stumbles through life, while the wife is the leader who holds the family together during their struggles.<sup>39</sup> Some shows characterize men as womanizers, adulterers, as lazy or deeply flawed characters who cannot maintain a relationship.

Although the fathers of the 1970's, 80's and 90's television shows like Ward Cleaver (*Leave it to Beaver*), Mike Brady (*Brady Bunch*), Dr. Cliff Huxtable (*The Cosby Show*), Steven Keaton (*Family Ties*), Dr. Jason Seaver (*Growing Pains*), and Danny Tanner (*Full House*) had flaws,<sup>40</sup> they showed how caring fathers would work through their foibles and flaws and still be the leader of the family, loved and respected by their children and/or spouse. Often there were scenes in which the father would take the time to sit down with the children or the spouse and share thoughts and feelings that demonstrate the moral or lesson of the show. These shows had the fathers disciplining the children for what they had done wrong or bringing the family together through tough times. These fathers were portrayed as decision makers, strong influences on their families, caring, loving and respectable.

Some would argue that these fathers were shown in idealized settings. However, these television programs show strong fathers with different family dynamics (single fathers, support of extended families, traditional, ethnic) being strong fathers over and over again.

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<sup>39</sup> Nicole Johnson, "The Depressing Depiction of Men in the Media." December 3, 2011, accessed September 26, 2013, <http://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/the-depressing-depiction-of-men-in-the-media>.

<sup>40</sup> Sarah Maccarelli, "How Men Are Portrayed on Television," *Yahoo Contributor Network*, last modified January 31, 2006, accessed September 26, 2013, <http://voices.yahoo.com/how-men-portrayed-television-15943.html>.

The new generation of TV dads puts those fathers, loved and honored by their families, in the rearview mirror of entertainment. Fathers like Homer Simpson (*The Simpsons*), Al Bundy (*Married With Children*), Tim “The Toolman” Taylor (*Home Improvement*), Hal (*Malcolm in the Middle*), and Tony Soprano (*The Sopranos*) help to create the stereotype of a man/father who is incompetent or selfish, definitely not as important as the woman/wife in the family. This type of father is not someone to be loved and respected by the family, rather, this father is to be tolerated, laughed at, and maybe even pitied as a lovable loser.<sup>41</sup>

The shows often give the impression that the family might be better off if the father wasn’t there at all.

By watching shows that depict these types of role models, boys are taught the woman is the one in power, and they will forever be looking to her for guidance and support, to fix what has gone wrong. Best-selling author Michael Gurain<sup>42</sup> voices his concerns about the portrayal of dads in the media.

They're kind of stupid and they're not needed. So the message to the young people is that males are not needed, or Dad is not needed. That's dangerous because it's going to set up guys who will not take care of their kids, and kids who will not respect or understand the males and women who will say, “Ah, they're not needed anyway.”<sup>43</sup>

Joe Kelly, co-founder of the group Dads and Daughters, believes the consequences go beyond the family to culture.

I think we as a culture have a blind spot when it comes to the role of men in families — men and women both. I don't believe it's a manner of injustice or anyone being victimized, I think it's habit. The habit is that men are of secondary importance in the life of a family. Therefore we all kind of expect men to be secondary. And it's not surprising that attitude plays itself out in many ways in our culture: in media portrayals and in the habits we have as families.<sup>44</sup>

Some would argue that we should not read too much into the depiction of man’s and woman’s roles in television shows. Yet, studies done on the effect of television on children have looked at the effects that the portrayal of violence in media, the use of drugs and alcohol,

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<sup>41</sup> Macarelli, *Men on Television*.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Gurain is a New York Times best-selling author and social philosopher. He is quoted in Sarah Peterson’s article *Dumbing Down Dad*.

<sup>43</sup> Sarah Petersen and Deseret News, “Dumbing Down Dad: How Media Present Husbands, Fathers as Useless,” *DeseretNews.com*, accessed September 26, 2013, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865574236/Dumbing-down-Dad-How-media-present-husbands-fathers-as-useless.html?pg=all>.

<sup>44</sup> Petersen, *Dumbing Down Dad*.

smoking and also male and female stereotypes have on children. Dr. Judith Myers-Walls<sup>45</sup>, a child psychologist, points out the how strongly media influences children.

Stereotypes and over-generalizations characterize the way young children think. In line with that tendency, children learn expected sex roles early and apply them liberally. They learn sex roles from many sources, but the media are among their prime teachers.<sup>46</sup>

The way the media depicts the roles of man and woman has a very strong influence in each of our lives. From the time we are young, the way we see families depicted on television helps to shape our view on what a man's role is in a family, how that role is to be fulfilled, and a woman's role is, and how she can fulfill that role.

Much of the information we receive comes from internet, television or print media. It is important for each Christian to note the biases that media has and its influence on our attitudes. What roles a men and a women fill in the family is being influenced. We learn much about these roles from our own family, but the media also helps to shape that image. If the media continues to devalue the roles of man and woman in the family we will be tempted to do the same.

## **Society**

The previous two sections of challenges to the role of man and woman are two pieces of a bigger pie called society. Much of what we consider "normal" comes from the influence which society has on us. Those who hold a traditional view of marriage find more and more pressures from society to change their views.

The media portrays and promotes stereotypes aimed at valuing women's issues over those of men and the strength of women over that of men.

We noted that many of the equalities that women have today are because of the feminist movement. This has been good for men and women both. While positive advances in the ability of women to be educated, to use their God-given gifts and abilities to the fullest, and to have equality in the workplace have been stated, we must also note that feminism has also negatively affected society's view on traditional roles for men and a women in society and in marriage.

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<sup>45</sup> Judith Myers-Walls is a professor Emerita` of Human Development and Family Studies at Purdue University, She is a Human Development Extension Specialist, and Certified Family Life Educator.

<sup>46</sup> Judith Myers-Walls, "CHILDREN: Helping Children Challenge Male Stereotypes" *Center for Media Literacy*, last modified December 17, 2013, accessed December 18, 2013, <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/children-helping-children-challenge-male-stereotypes>.



Everyone should strive to make personal improvements. It can be a very good thing for a man to be more sensitive with his feelings. It can also be very good for women to seek to be more thoughtful and express opinions less emotionally.<sup>47</sup>

However, society seeks to go beyond self-improvement. Society seeks to create a gender-neutral world where the need for boy/man and girl/woman labels has been eliminated.

This idea has led to a push to raise children without reinforcing gender stereotypes. A casual review of an internet search of the phrase *raising children without gender stereotypes* reveals blogs, news stories and websites that provide “helpful” ideas for parents seeking to raise their children to be gender neutral.

This idea that society is better without traditional gender roles has led to a stronger push for rights for gays and lesbians. If there are no traditional gender roles, then marriage can be redefined because we now have a more “enlightened” approach than the traditional view had.

The few voices once speaking in closed circles have become more aggressive proponents looking for equality, while also demanding that society accept their sinful behavior as normal. Pop culture and education on all levels are calling for Americans to embrace alternative lifestyles.<sup>48</sup>

With this shift in the view of traditional gender roles, the view of the household has changed dramatically from a decade or two ago. Anecdotal evidence from teachers and pastors shows an increase in single-parent homes, blended families, unmarried parents living under one roof, non-traditional caretakers, increased daycare use and gay and lesbian households. These new types of households have been given the label “non-traditional” households.

The husband is no longer the primary bread winner and the wife is no longer the homemaker. The number of stay-at-home dads has doubled over the last decade.<sup>49</sup> Stay-at-home moms are down from 51.9% in the 1970’s to 33% in 2013.<sup>50</sup>

In Christian freedom, couples are free to choose which spouse fulfills which duties<sup>51</sup> in the home, who works outside of the home, and who stays in the home while still following God’s

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<sup>47</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 67.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Sullivan, editor, *Same-Sex Marriage: Pro and Con*, (New York: Random House, 1997) 135 as cited by Pope, *Feminism*, 122

<sup>49</sup> Bonnie Rochman. "Stay-at-Home Dads: No More Angst. These Guys Love What They Do", Time.com accessed November 7, 2013, <http://healthland.time.com/2012/06/15/stay-at-home-dads-no-more-angst-these-guys-love-what-they-do/>.

<sup>50</sup> Maya Rhodan. "U.S.. US Study House Husbands More Common Than Ever Comments ” Time.com, accessed November 7, 2013, <http://nation.time.com/2013/09/18/study-house-husbands-more-common-than-ever/>.

roles for marriage in our households. Yet, it is interesting to note the challenges that arise when the duties we fill in our family are not consistent with traditional roles held by men and women.

Women make up almost half (47%) of the workforce, up from 38% in 1970.<sup>52</sup> In 1987, 87% of Americans polled agreed that they had old-fashioned views of marriage and family. In 2002 the number was down to 71%. That number decreased to 61% among those under 30 years old.<sup>53</sup>

Society no longer holds the view that the men go to work and as the primary breadwinners and women stay at home and manage the family and the household. In a society that encourages wives and mothers to work outside the home, there will be more struggles for husbands and wives to balance God's roles for their life. They will have to balance many different duties including: household tasks, child-raising, financial and work duties more than they had to with a more traditional household as in the past.

As the world moves further away from God's roles of man and woman, Christian husbands and wives will and do experience conflict within their own marriages and with others in the world. Peter West quotes Michael Burke, a British journalist about the change in society.

Our society is becoming a femocracy in which men and masculinity are being marginalized. Men are edged out of the family, the workplace and wider society. The game of life is increasingly played by women's rules; success and failure measured by women's criteria... In this feminized society, men who act like women are clearly preferred to men who act like men.<sup>54</sup>

Forty years ago many parents looked to Dr. Benjamin Spock for advice on how to raise their children. A whole generation was raised using Dr. Spock's wisdom. Even 40 years ago, Dr. Spock spoke about the shifting views of society in a TIME magazine article.<sup>55</sup>

We have neutralized the sexes so that all role distinctions are disappearing. The husband's reference to his wife as the boss and his need to call her "mother" are indicative of the shift in authority from husband to wife.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Duties are the jobs that husband and wife fulfill within their marriage.

<sup>52</sup> "The Harried Life of the Working Mother." *Pew Social Demographic Trends RSS*, accessed November 10, 2013, <<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/10/01/the-harried-life-of-the-working-mother/>>.

<sup>53</sup> Pew Demographic, *Harried Life*.

<sup>54</sup> Peter West . "How the Media Portray Men a Review of J.R. McNamara's Media and Male Identity," Boys Learning, last modified 2009, accessed November 7, 2013. <http://www.boyslearning.com.au/articles/men/How%20the%20Media%20Portray%20Men.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> a noted expert in child rearing and family issues

<sup>56</sup> "Where She's Going," *Time Magazine* as cited by Edwin Schmelzer, "Relation between Husband and Wife." (Presented to the Michigan District 86<sup>th</sup> Convention, Saginaw, MI, June 13-15, 1972), 5.

Another quote from Dr. Spock in the same article:

The roles in the home tend to become reversed. Women emasculate their men and then despise them because they are emasculated. Men defeminate their wives and then hate them because they are defeminated.”<sup>57</sup>

The questions remain: When does the non-traditional become traditional? How are Christian couples to fight the temptations to set aside God’s roles for marriage and become part of the world? In general, people follow the trends of the culture and society they live in. What is normal to our society becomes normal to us. When technology advances, we advance. When fashion changes, we change. We are tempted to apply this same type of thinking to God’s roles for marriage.

That is the very thing the devil wants us to do. He wants to use those changing mores of the world around us to create doubt in our minds so that we follow that societal way of thinking. The devil uses many of these changes in society to attack God’s roles for a man and woman in a marriage; to create doubt and to chip away at what God has provided for marriage in his Word.

### **Attacks That Challenge the Bible**

Attacks on God’s role of man and woman come in very subtle forms like those covered in the previous sections. They can also be direct attacks aimed at the authority of God and his Word.

Any and all attacks on the Bible oppose God’s truth as he reveals it to us in that Word. Often the devil uses those who follow feminism to initiate these attacks on the Bible. Paul Felix divides the feminist ideas about the Bible into four classes.

1. Secular Feminists: Those who do not accept the Bible as authoritative.
2. Religious Feminists: Those who do not identify with Christianity, but whose beliefs nevertheless include a religious worldview.
3. Christian Feminists: Those who have a commitment to the Christian faith, but only accept the authority of Scripture in a limited way.

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<sup>57</sup> Where She’s Going,” *Time Magazine* as cited by Schmelzer pg 5.

4. Evangelical Feminists: Those who have a high view of Scripture. They believe the Bible teaches the full equality of men and women without distinctions based on gender.<sup>58</sup>

It is important to note that not all feminists hold to every teaching or argument of feminism. Many people identify themselves as being somewhere on the feminism spectrum. Yet, not all of those who identify themselves with feminism agree that they attack what the Bible says concerning God's roles for marriage.

The Equality Feminists and the Radical Feminists categories serve to divide feminism into those who are conservative<sup>59</sup> in nature and those who are liberal<sup>60</sup> in nature.

For this reason we will group the biblical ideology of the feminist groups into two smaller categories. These categories are Revolution, which includes feminists from the Secular and Religious feminist camps and Reformation, which includes those from the Christian and Evangelical feminist camps.<sup>61</sup>

Revolution includes those who seek to overthrow God and his Word. They want to take away the authority of God's Word and replace it with human wisdom and customs. Those in this camp have a very low view of Scripture. Scripture is viewed as an enemy with little if anything that is to be kept.

Those in the Revolution camp seek to discredit the Bible; to get rid of the Bible or at least the parts of the Bible that they do not agree with. These open and obvious attacks are a very real danger for Christians because they seek to create doubt about the validity of what God has said concerning his roles for man and woman in marriage.

The second sub-category, Reformation, favors a more subtle attack on the role of man and woman in the Bible. Those in this camp have a higher view of Scripture than the Revolution camp does. They do not stand in direct opposition to the Bible as those in Revolution do. They seek to try to redefine and retranslate the portions of the Bible that deal with the role of man and woman to make them more acceptable to the world around them.

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<sup>58</sup> Paul Felix, "The Hermeneutics of Evangelical Feminism," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Fall 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Merely wanting equality with men in jobs, education, etc.

<sup>60</sup> Seeking to overthrow men and to have the role of woman become the norm

<sup>61</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 247.

The devil is constantly trying to discredit the Bible by an all-out revolution, a rejection of what God says. However, he can also accomplish his purpose by a reformation or watering down of God's Word so that it says nothing at all.

## **Revolution**

The Revolution camp is largely a focus of the radical or liberal feminism. This camp feels the language of the Bible and the roles God lays down in his Word are reasons that men use to keep women in submission in and out of marriage. They feel these things make them second-class citizens in a male-dominated world. One of the weapons in this attack is to make the Bible the source of the danger that they are fighting against.

There are a number of ways that this is done. The first is to attack the God of the Bible as being a chauvinist and sexist. This God has set up the writings of the Bible in order to empower men to be suppressive of women and women to be suppressed by men. The fact that God has chosen to reveal himself with male pronouns and refer to himself with male references is cited as proof of this fact. "God as he" is pointed to as the reason that society has historically been male-centric and the reason that women have been subordinate. They even go so far as to say this language helps men in their chauvinism and sexism, empowering them to be that way.<sup>62</sup>

Roger Nicole states the argument in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, "The most acute type of conflict is apparent when people understand the Bible as a sharply restrictive book, written in a patriarchal culture and projecting an image of woman that is clearly unacceptable to those who espouse feminism."<sup>63</sup>

Bloesch says, "Patriarchalism is an ideology that the church must be on guard against. Indeed, in one sense patriarchalism is more dangerous than feminism because patriarchal imagery was used for divinity in the Bible."<sup>64</sup>

The next attack takes this thinking of blaming God for today's problems, one step further. Even though God was to blame, man was the enemy; in this second attack, God is the enemy of women.

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<sup>62</sup> Groothuis, *Woman in Conflict*, 65.

<sup>63</sup> Mickelson, ed. *Women*, 42-43.

<sup>64</sup> Bloesch, *Sexist*, 94.

They provide evidence from the Old Testament's use of the patriarchal society, the civil law, the existence and "acceptance" of polygamy, arranged marriages and treatment of wives and maidservants as property. They point to these things as proof that God is not only at fault for what man does, he has commanded and condoned the current atmosphere of male dominance. Groothuis says, "They paint God in human terms and assume, since he claims to have all power, he is a power-hungry, tyrannical."<sup>65</sup>

Elizabeth Cady Stanton is regarded as one of the first woman's rights activists. While her time period coincides with Equality Feminism, a look at her book *The Woman's Bible* shows that she had much in common with the Radical Feminists of this Revolution group. In her book, she taught and believed that the Bible was wrong and at fault for much of what was holding women back.

From the inauguration of the movement for woman's emancipation the Bible has been used to hold her in the "divinely ordained sphere," prescribed in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>66</sup>

The only points in which I differ from the ecclesiastical teaching is that I do not believe that any man ever saw or talked with God, I do not believe that God inspired the Mosaic code or told historians what they say he did about woman, for all the religions on the face of the earth degrade her.<sup>67</sup>

Women have been taught by their religious guardians that the Bible, unlike all other books, was written under special inspiration of the Great Ruling Intelligence of the Universe. Not conversant with works on science and higher criticism, which point out its fabulous pretensions, they cling to it with an unreasoning tenacity, like a savage to his fetich. Though it is full of contradictions, absurdities and impossibilities and bears the strongest evidence in every line of its human origin, and in moral sentiment is below many of the best books of our own day, they blindly worship it as the Word of God.<sup>68</sup>

If, however, we accept the Darwinian theory, that the race has been a gradual growth from the lower to a higher form of life, and that the story of the fall is a myth, we can exonerate the snake, emancipate the woman, and reconstruct a more rational religion for the nineteenth century, and thus escape all the perplexities of the Jewish mythology as of no more importance than those of the Greek, Persian, and Egyptian.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Groothuis, *Women Conflict*, 101.

<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Original Feminist Attack on the Bible (The Woman's Bible)* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 7.

<sup>67</sup> Stanton, *Woman's Bible*, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Stanton, *Woman's Bible*, 213,214.

<sup>69</sup> Stanton, *Woman's Bible* 214.

Stanton's book, written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has been reprinted under the title *The Original Feminist Attack on the Bible*. It has been used by feminists for its thoughts on the Bible for many years.<sup>70</sup>

This proof from the Bible showing that God is against women is then coupled with human reason to present the case that women are victims of man because of the teachings God has given in the Bible. Their logic goes something like this:

1. If God is evil

-- Which he is proven to be by his treatment of women in the Bible

2. And if God is male

--Which he is proven to be by the male pronouns and allusions to God's maleness in the Bible

Then: Beginning with God, all men are evil.

A third way these revolutionists attack the Word of God is to question the inspiration of the Bible and the authors God inspired to write the books of the Bible.

The injunctions of St. Paul have had such a decided influence in fixing the legal status of woman, that it is worth our while to consider its source. In dealing with this question we must never forget that the majority of the writings of the New Testament were not really written or published by those whose name they bear... We congratulate ourselves that we may shift some of these Biblical arguments that have such a sinister effect from their firm foundation.<sup>71</sup>

Another way that the Bible is attacked by those who want to get rid of God's roles for man and woman is to change the masculine forms and wording of the Bible into genderless or feminine language. Pope lists these three examples of feminine language in his book *Feminism*.

1. Churches have gone from using the names of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy

Ghost and have substituted the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer.<sup>72</sup>

2. The Oxford *New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Edition* has Jesus praying "Our Father/Mother in heaven" in the Lord's Prayer.<sup>73</sup>

3. Others have begun referring to God merely as our mother.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> An internet web search of the Women's Bible provides one with many links to feminist blogs, writings and websites that reference the work. Some sites also list quotes from the book which are anti-Bible.

<sup>71</sup> Stanton, *Woman's Bible*, 158.

<sup>72</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 248.

<sup>73</sup> [www.jeremiahproject.com/prophecy/feminist/html](http://www.jeremiahproject.com/prophecy/feminist/html) as cited by Pope, *Feminism*, 248.

<sup>74</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 248.

Much can be said in favor of researching new methods to properly bring the Word of God to people. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary has begun to work with students on inductive sermon preaching alongside the deductive method that has been the norm for many years. However, finding ways to communicate God's revelation clearly and effectively is not the aim of this rewording of the Bible. Pope speaks of one such attempt, a 1993 Re-Imagining Conference whose focus was to re-imagine God in a new way, different from the Bible.<sup>75</sup>

All of these attacks by the Revolution group seek to cause doubt in the mind of the believer. They seek to look at what God has said about the roles in marriage and to raise questions concerning their validity. By doing so, they are trying to cause enough confusion that any person is able to say there is enough doubt concerning these roles that they do not need to be followed any longer.

### **Reformation**

The attacks of the Reformation camp are more subtle than those of Revolution. Those in this camp claim to hold a high view of Scripture. Instead of doing away with God's Word, they would like to reform "controversial" parts of the Bible to make them more acceptable to society.

Many in this camp identify themselves as Egalitarians or Evangelical (Biblical) Feminists. Because this camp makes use of Scripture in their arguments, they often cause more misunderstanding and confusion for WELS members than those in the Revolution camp.

Egalitarians and Evangelical Feminists claim to stand on the principles of the Bible. They accept that the Bible teaches we should love one another, be kind and compassionate to one another and serve one another in love. Yet, they take these ideas too far when they try to apply them to marriage and contradict the leadership role that God has clearly given to men. Groothuis says,

Unlike mainstream feminists who seem bent on being separate from and superior to men, biblical feminists aim for both women and men to become more balanced people who are more harmoniously related to one another. The goal of evangelical feminism is that men and women be allowed to serve God as individuals, according to their own unique gifts rather than according to a culturally predetermined personality slot called "Christian manhood" or "Christian womanhood."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Pope, *Feminism*, 254.

<sup>76</sup> Groothuis, *Women in Conflict*, 109-110.



Egalitarians accomplish their objective of taking that leadership role out of Scripture by taking a different hermeneutical approach to those passages and sections that relate to God's roles for man and woman.

Pieper states a basic hermeneutical rule that Lutherans apply to Scripture:

Our Lutheran teachers call to mind the following hermeneutical rule, a reminder which some call tiresome, but which is nevertheless very necessary: Every word must be taken in its first, that is, its proper meaning, until circumstances contained in the context or an express declaration of the writer compel one to substitute the figurative or symbolic meaning for the natural.<sup>77</sup>

Robert Johnson points out the hermeneutic of the Evangelical Feminist.

Basic to each is the central issue: *the role of the reader/interpreter in the hermeneutical process*.<sup>78</sup> It is the reader who uses incomplete knowledge as the basis of judgment. It is the reader who chooses between equally valid possibilities based on personal preference. It is the reader who develops criteria for what is universal and what is culturally specific, what is translatable and what is transcultural. It is the reader who brings to the text a specific understanding of Scripture's overarching unity.<sup>79</sup>

Many of these attacks by the Reformation camp do not follow the very basic principle of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. Instead, they allow the reader to make decisions about which parts of the Bible they will follow.

This subtle attack on the Bible targets inconsistencies that they see in the account of creation in Genesis.

Wayne Grudem lists 6 creation arguments that Evangelical Feminists use to prove the Bible does not teach biblical authority.

1. There could be no authority before the fall if man and woman were created in the image of God.
2. Both man and woman were told to rule over creation. No difference between them.
3. Headship only came after the fall and is a product of sin.
4. Helper implies equality making Eve equal with Adam.
5. Suitable implies superior. Therefore Eve is actually superior to Adam
6. The serpent approached Eve first, implying no authority.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. III (Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 318.

<sup>78</sup> Their emphasis, not mine.

<sup>79</sup> Mickelson, ed, *Women Authority*, 35.

<sup>80</sup> Wayne A Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012), table of contents.

In his book *Beyond Sex Roles*,<sup>81</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian takes this argument of the Genesis account even further, drawing more conclusions that go beyond what Scripture actually says. In speaking of the word *helper* from Genesis 1:18:

If anything, the word points to the inadequacy of and the helplessness of the man when he was bereft of the woman in Eden.... To wrench the word helper from this precise context, where it has the strength of rescuer, and to invest it with the connotations of domesticity or female subservience violates the intent of the biblical text.<sup>82</sup>

In speaking about Eve being created after Adam:

There is no justification for viewing the derivation of Eve from the body of Adam as a sign of her subordination to him. Such a theory might have a foundation if she had been made out of the ground like the plants, the animals, and Adam himself. But the story of Eve's creation teaches precisely the opposite lesson. Unlike Adam, she was made out of human flesh already in existence. Humanity twice refined, she is at least his equal.<sup>83</sup>

A second example of this type of attack looks at woman in service to the Lord in Scripture. They say because God used women at special times and in special ways to guide his people is clear evidence that God never intended hierarchy in marriage.

This theory states that since these women were given the gifts by God and the responsibility to serve him, this must mean that all women of all time are also given the gifts and the responsibility to serve in leadership positions regardless of the places in Scripture where God has placed clear leadership principles.

This camp would say that these instances of woman's service prove the rule that there is no longer authority or hierarchy between the sexes today.

Secondly, this group takes the passages that talk about God's roles for man and woman and retranslates or redefines them without allowing Scripture to guide them in the proper meaning and context.

An example of this approach to Scripture lies in the problem and the solution of the word κεφαλή from Ephesians 5:23. They see a problem with the historical translation of κεφαλή as head: "For the husband is the *head* of the wife as Christ is the *head* of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." This translation of κεφαλή sets up a hierarchy which they see as a

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<sup>81</sup> Bilezikian lays out many of the same Egalitarian arguments as Grudem states in the first two chapters of his book.

<sup>82</sup> Gilbert G Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family*. 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic) .

<sup>83</sup> Bilezikian, *Sex Roles*, 23.

problem. It shows the headship of Christ as the leader, the authority, the head of his church, while at the same time being the loving example of the way that the husband should also lovingly be the leader, the head of his wife.

Citing new translational evidence,<sup>84</sup> they claim that the *κεφαλή* is properly translated as *source* and not *head*. Therefore, if Christ is the source of the church, authority is not a part of the definition as it was with head. Therefore the man is not the head, or leader of his wife, he is merely the source of a submission that is mutual between the two of them.

A third example of the Reformation camp's attacks is the redefinition of Ephesians 5:21-23. In this instance the passages are taken out of their immediate context so that they no longer teach what God wants them to, rather they teach something new and different about the role of man and woman. This is seen in the emphasis of Ephesians 5:21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." to the detriment of Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord."

This group raises contextual arguments to pose a solution to the "problem" of hierarchy. They say that the "mutual submission" from verse 21 nullifies the "hierarchy" in verse 22. Being subject, they claim, can only be done among equals. They then make the claim that the submission of a wife to a husband is no different from the submission of one Christian to another.<sup>85</sup>

Grudem argues that leadership and hierarchy are always included in the Bible's definition of submission.<sup>86</sup> However, Egalitarians teach the two (authority and submission) are concepts that can be separated; that couples should be mutually submissive to one another without authority between them.

Although Ephesians 5:21 is only one passage away from verse 22, it is not a passage that overshadows and nullifies verse 22. If it were, contextually speaking, then it would also nullify the authority of parents and masters over children and slaves.

In this section Paul is not speaking about a general submission where everyone treats everyone well. He is talking about a very specific submission that goes beyond a general feeling or action. He is speaking of Christians showing their thanks to God and love to one another by

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<sup>84</sup> Mickelson, ed. *Women Authority*, 67ff

<sup>85</sup> Wayne Grudem, "The Myth of Mutual Submission as an Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, Foundations for the family series (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2002), 221–231.

<sup>86</sup> Grudem, *Myth*, 223.

living in the roles he has given to them. This submission shows itself in the wife submitting to their husbands as to the Lord, children to parents and slaves to masters.<sup>87</sup>

The other attack of this camp is to say that the roles of man and woman were merely for that day and time, and do not need to be followed today. They site Paul's command in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and extend the application of this passage, where Paul is speaking specifically to the Corinthians about a problem in their midst, to all of the other references of the role of man and woman in the Bible.<sup>88</sup>

The last attack of Reformation camp we will look at in this thesis<sup>89</sup> borrows a page from the Revolution camp and denies the authority of Paul's writings. Writer Paul Jewitt points to biblical writers as being merely men. They take away from the power of the Holy Spirit inspiring these men and place "errors" of the roles of man and woman at the feet of men who were merely speaking their minds at their time. Concerning Paul, Jewitt says:

Because these two perspectives -- the Jewish and the Christian-- are incompatible, there is no satisfying way to harmonize the Pauline argument of female subordination with the larger Christian vision of which the great apostle to the Gentiles, was himself the primary architect.<sup>90</sup>

To resolve the difficulty of Paul [Paul's teaching of female subordination], one must recognize the human as well as the divine quality of Scripture... While the theologians have never agreed on a precise theory of inspiration... they tended to ignore the human side of Scripture and to think of inspiration in a way that ruled out the possibility of human limitation whatsoever in the Bible.<sup>91</sup>

Whether the attacks come from the "radical" Revolution camp or the "conservative" Reformation camp, these attacks on the Bible are tools of the devil seeking to chip away at the foundation of God's roles for man and woman and undercut what God would have us do.

The devil tempts us to walk away from the Lord in many ways. These attacks of the Revolution and the Reformation camps are just two of the ways Satan uses. We must remain firm in our knowledge of the Bible so that we do not fall into the temptation of turning our backs

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<sup>87</sup> Grudem, *Myth*, 225.

<sup>88</sup> Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 242.

<sup>89</sup> Once again the thesis is not an exhaustive list of arguments or attacks, but an overview of some attacks.

<sup>90</sup> Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 112-113.

<sup>91</sup> Jewitt, *Man as Male*, 134-135.

on what God has clearly told us in the Bible about his roles for marriage. We must be vigilant that we don't seek to water those roles down for the sake of living a peaceful life here on earth.

### **Biblical Principles**

In the next section of the thesis we turn to the biblical foundation that God has built in his Word regarding the roles for man and woman in marriage.

No discussion of the roles of man and woman can begin without examining at the special status given to man and woman by God at creation. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). This special status of man and woman is seen in the words "*in his own image.*"

At creation, God blessed both man and woman with the special privilege of being created in his image. This means that man and woman share an equal status in God's eyes as his children. This equality before God means that man and woman are equals in Christ. Through faith in Christ they receive his gifts of faith, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation won on the cross. This is confirmed in the New Testament. "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26-28). This passage shows us that being clothed with Christ goes far beyond race, ethnic, financial or gender roles. Through the work of Christ, by faith, men and women receive the gifts he has won for us on the cross.

We also realize that both man and woman are equal in another way. Because of the fall into sin, man and woman are also equally under the curse of the Law. Both man and woman lost the image of God after the fall. They were both naked and ashamed. They were both given consequences because of their sins and were both banished from the Garden of Eden. Isaiah 59:2 gives us a clear picture that both Adam and Eve were separated from God because of their sin. "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear you." David says, "All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3). David repeats much the same thing later in Psalms, "...There is no one who does good. Everyone has turned

away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good not even one” (Psalm 53:1,3).

This equality under the Law is confirmed in the New Testament as well. Paul quotes Psalm 14 and 53, “All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one” (Romans 3:12). Again Paul says, ”There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:22,23).

In dealing with the roles of man and woman, we must always remember that man and woman are equal in status as sinners who fall short of the glory of God and as saints whom the blood of Jesus purifies.

In saying that we are equals in these two ways, we realize that God did not create man and woman to be exact physical and emotional equals. There are many differences that God created within man and woman that make them unique and different from one another. Dr. James Dobson lists some of these differences:

1. Women have three very important physiological functions totally absent in men--menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation. Each of these mechanisms influences behavior and feelings significantly. Female hormonal patterns are more complex and varied. The glands work differently in the two sexes. For example, a woman's thyroid is larger and more active; it enlarges during menstruation and pregnancy, which makes her more prone to goiter, provides resistance to cold, and is associated with the smooth skin, relatively hairless body, and the thin layer of subcutaneous fat that are important elements in the concept of personal beauty. Women are also more responsive emotionally, laughing and crying more readily.
2. Men are 50 percent stronger than women in brute strength.
3. The sexes differ in skeletal structure, women having a shorter head, broader face, less protruding chin, shorter legs, and longer trunk.
4. Men and women differ in every cell of their bodies because they carry a differing chromosomal pattern. The implications of those genetic components range from obvious to extremely subtle.<sup>92</sup>

God certainly had a reason for doing this. He had a plan and a pattern for man and woman that included specific roles that they would carry out in this “marriage.” God’s original plan for his physical and emotional design for man and woman is laid out for us in Genesis 2:18, 20-24.

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<sup>92</sup> Dr. James Dobson, *Physical Differences Between Men and Women* Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.. <http://www.drjamesdobson.org/Solid-Answers/Answers?a=ff773023-2693-410d-b9e1-662f6985be4e> (accessed March 21, 2012).

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

It was not by human choice or mere chance that roles for man and woman were created. God established roles at creation with the manner in which he created Adam and then Eve. In verse 18 God says, "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for him." Professor Carl Lawrenz states God established this helper role in two ways at creation.

She is a helper by the manner in which she was made and by virtue of what she was like through God's creative action. What was true of her is then true of all womankind inasmuch as they, too, are what they were made to be through Eve's creation. Woman was made for a subordinate position, for the position of a helper in relation to man. Though we will return to this thought later, we want to state even here that "subordinate" must not and should not be equated with being of lesser quality, value or importance. It has to do with God's order; which is something quite different.<sup>93</sup>

God had a plan creating woman in this way "for" man. In creating Eve from Adam, God was showing Adam that he was not complete. He needed something more to be complete. It was God's plan to create for Adam a companion that would bring him the blessings of companionship and helpfulness for his benefit.<sup>94</sup> Professor Lawrenz speaks of this helper created by God for Adam's benefit, "In other words, the reason that God made a helper for man was this that it was something good, salutary, needful. Another leader to share his headship would not have served God's purpose for the welfare of human society."<sup>95</sup>

In creating man and woman in this way, God was not devaluing woman in any way. Yet it is significant that God chose to create man first. In doing this God was establishing man with

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<sup>93</sup> Carl Lawrenz, "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture", n.d., accessed February 7, 2014, <http://www.wlssays.net/files/LawrenzRole.pdf>, 3.

<sup>94</sup> John Brug, *A Bible Study on Man and Woman in God's World*. (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), 14.

<sup>95</sup> Lawrenz, *Role of Man and Woman*, 5.

the responsibility to be the leader in this union. This significance is reaffirmed by Paul, “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1Timothy 2:13).<sup>96</sup>

At the same time he establishes the responsibility of man, he is also establishing the special and important nature of woman. By creating woman from the rib of man, God established just how special this helper was to be. Adam shows he understands the special nature of his wife Eve with the words, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “woman,” for she was taken out of man” (Genesis 2:23).

God established an order for husband and wife at creation. Before the fall into sin, Adam and Eve would have lived in perfect harmony with God’s roles for them without the hindrance of sin or selfishness to cause problems in their fulfillment of those roles.

The fall into sin destroyed this perfectness that God had brought into being at creation, yet it did not abolish the equal status of man and woman before him, the roles he had established, or the unique differences God had created man and woman with. Even with the fall into sin frustrating God’s perfect plan, God shows both the equality of status and the differences in his created beings when he shows the consequences for their sin in Genesis 3:16-19.

To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

The equality of status is revealed when God says that sin will cause both man and woman to die (v 19). The status is also revealed in Genesis 3:15 when God promises to send a Savior, who would save them both.

The difference in the created beings is shown in the consequences that man and woman would now face while on the earth. Woman would experience pain in childbirth, desire for her husband and a husband’s rule over her. Man would experience painful toil, hard work and frustration when he worked the ground. God certainly could have given man and woman the

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<sup>96</sup> WELS Conference of Presidents. *Man and Woman in God's World An Expanded Study* ( Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1987), 6.



same consequences for their sin, but instead he chose unique consequences in accordance with the differences he had created in them.

God repeats, reiterates and confirms these roles for a man and woman in the New Testament in a number of places.

Paul repeats the order of creation and the importance of the leadership and companion (helper) roles that God laid out at creation as a guideline for the New Testament Corinthians when he writes, “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man,” (1 Corinthians 11:8,9). Paul also refers to the creation order of Genesis 2 in Ephesians 5:22-33.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

While some see these passages that lay out the roles for man and woman in marriage as suppressive and oppressive, God is lovingly laying out his roles for man and woman to help them to live together in peace and unity. As we look at these passages it is good for us to have a working definition of what it means to be a leader or head and to submit or be a helper in the family.

For a proper understanding of this headship (leadership) principle we do not look at the world’s definition of leadership, where sin has turned it into a struggle for power and a dominance issue, we look to the Bible’s example of leadership.

When we speak of head or authority in the Bible, we are describing an individual who exercises authority over another person. In the case of marriage, we are saying: just as Christ serves as head over the church, so also is man to function as head over his wife.<sup>97</sup>

The best example of true leadership comes from Jesus himself. Jesus was the ultimate leader while he was here on earth and now remains the ultimate head of the church as he reigns on high. His leadership is such a good model for the role of man because it includes love and service for others.

As we look at Jesus' leadership style, we do not see a struggle for power or dominance; Jesus leadership showed itself in committed love and service for the lost and a servant heart for those who needed his forgiveness. Jesus put his committed and sacrificial love into action for his disciples by being willing to wash their feet.<sup>98</sup>

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup> "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:12-17).

Our Master and Lord, the head of the church and leader of all men, was willing to serve those whom he had come to save; this was an example of true servant leadership.

A second example of Jesus' leadership is his committed and sacrificial love for all people, including the chief priests, the teachers of the Law and those who sentenced him to die on the cross. Even as he is hanging on the cross he prays for them, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus' leadership style shows his committed and sacrificial love for the people he had come to save, even those who had rejected him, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34).

Jesus suffering and death was his ultimate sign of love and leadership. Jesus, the Son of God, willingly lived his life and gave himself up for the world, to take the sins of that world away.

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<sup>97</sup> Ephesians 5:22-33

<sup>98</sup> An undignified task left for the least of the servants to perform.

This is the same type of committed and sacrificial love that God wants the husband to exhibit as the head, or leader, of the household. God wants the man to model for his wife the committed and sacrificial love that Jesus displayed for the world and for his church. The man will love his wife and even be willing to sacrifice himself for her as Jesus did for us. God wants husbands to be willing servants for their wives, not dictators who demand that supper be on the table at a certain time.

Paul provides husbands with instructions based on the example of Christ. No earthly example of loving leadership would be as clear as the example of Christ lovingly leading the church and even being willing to die for her. “Love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy” (Ephesians 5:25). Men are to love their wives as Christ loved us, even being willing to die for her.

With these words Paul impresses on husbands the responsibility that leadership in the marriage brings. It is not something to be abused or neglected.

This type of servant leadership, with Christ as the example, safeguards the wife from many of the world’s perceptions of oppression and suppression. The husband is not in a leadership position to keep anything from his wife, rather, to thank his Savior, the husband will seek to love and support his wife in a Christ-like way. Remembering that this is the type of leadership her husband is modeling will remind her that when he “gives in” to her advice, he is not doing it because she has been good at nagging, debating or cajoling; he has done so because he has lovingly listened to her and has realized that her way of thinking is correct.

Knowing this definition and model of leadership also safeguards the wife when spouses don’t agree and an unpopular decision has to be made. The wife will realize that, like Christ, the decision has been made with a heart that is seeking to do what is best for her and the family.

It is also very important to note that while Jesus was a servant leader he also clearly demonstrated the authority that came with his ministry. He was willing to command his disciples and all people on earth to take his Word to the ends of the earth.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19,20).

With these words Jesus not only points out that he has leadership granted to him by the Father, but he is also willing to command his disciples to perform the mission he laid out for

them. The disciples understood Jesus had authority, given to him by the Father, to be their leader and to command them to take the Gospel message to the whole world.

In the same way we look to Scripture to provide a definition for headship and leadership. We also look to Scripture to provide us with a definition for helper and submission.

Many find the biblical teaching of a wife's submission to her husband indefensible. The idea that husband and wife are anything less than full partners in a marriage is held as an example of the suppressive and oppressive mindset of those who do not want to follow biblical roles for marriage.<sup>99</sup> The same claim of inequality is attached to the term helper, which is a term applied to the teaching of submission. They say that using the term helper creates a distinction between male and female. Since it creates an inequality it must be bad.<sup>100</sup>

Once again, we step away from the world's definitions of submission and helper, which includes the ideas of inequality and inferiority, and we look to Scripture to see how God wants wives to be submissive to their husbands in their marriages.

As a man, Jesus was and is submissive. The word literally means "to be subject to". Jesus willingly placed himself under (he was subject to) the rules of human nature. The Son of God humbled himself, he became submissive to the laws of nature, by being born a human being. The eternal Son of God became submissive to death, so that we might be saved. "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8).

Jesus was submissive to his heavenly Father. The Son of God placed himself under the will of his Father to walk the road to Calvary for us. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane showing his submission to the will of his Father, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

Unlike those who say that submission is a bad thing, the Bible concludes that submission is right and proper. As true man, Jesus was and is submissive.

The type of submission in Ephesians 5, shown to us in Jesus' living example, is the type of submission that God wants wives to show in a marriage.

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<sup>99</sup> See the previous section, *Challenges to the Biblical Roles of Man and Woman* for arguments pertaining to the equality question.

<sup>100</sup> See the previous section, *Challenges to the Biblical Roles of Man and Woman* for arguments pertaining to the equality question.

Paul explains that wives are to yield in submission to their husbands using the image of the church being submissive to Christ as her example. This yielding in submission is a voluntary action by the woman, done out of faith and love to the Lord.<sup>101</sup> Paul doesn't use any earthly reason to validate this command. He bases the validation of this command on God's Word, originally stated at creation. No earthly example of submission would be as clear as the church yielding in submission to her Savior, Jesus.

Paul impresses on women the importance of their help, cooperation and submission as a needed and valued part of the marriage.

This type of submission exemplified by Christ, safeguards the husband in a marriage. He knows that, to thank her Savior, his wife will seek to be submissive in the same way Christ was submissive to his Father's plan of salvation. Knowing that his wife is showing Christ-like submission, the husband will know that when he makes a decision, we will not have to face an angry wife, who has not gotten her way, who will nag, cajole, or barter for a different outcome. He will see his wife accepting the decision, knowing that her husband is doing what is best for their family, in keeping with his role.

This type of submission also safeguards the wife because the husband knows that as he seeks his wife's advice, he does not "win" the argument by making a decision; rather his wife is supporting him, in thanks to her Savior, by being submissive. The husband remembers that although she is blessed with many gifts and abilities, she will willingly place herself in the helper role in order to thank her Savior for what he has done for us.

Paul goes further to safeguard these roles by reminding husbands and wives that they are both fulfilling roles created by God at creation (v 31) and doing it out of reverence for Christ.<sup>102</sup> Peter also provides support for the biblical roles of men and women in 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the Word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

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.

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<sup>101</sup> Ephesians 5:22

<sup>102</sup> Conference of Presidents, *Role of Man and Woman*, 18.

Peter guides husbands to put their thankfulness to the Lord into action by reminding them they have the responsibility to deal with their wives out of a considerate and affectionate understanding. Husbands are to remember the special status that his wife has of being an heir of eternal life as he is.<sup>103</sup>

It must be noted that God-given leadership (headship) has been misused by sinful man to create abusive and selfish relationships. It has been misapplied in situations that do not fall under a correct interpretation of their role. Nowhere does Scripture suggest that by giving these roles to man and woman God was giving an advantage to one or the other. Scripture always bases its role for man and woman on Christ's example of sacrificial and committed love, respect and honor.

There are many examples about what the role of husband and wife will look like. One of those is a business. A well-run company may have a board that meets to discuss the business. All the members of the board are focused on making the business the best it can be. Decisions are discussed and maybe even debated, but finally decisions need to be made and carried out. Often a business will have a CEO who will have to make the decision in case the board is deadlocked. The board accepts the decision the CEO makes, because it is understood that he is in a position of leadership.<sup>104</sup>

If we place this illustration onto the framework of a marriage we see that there are many parallels. Just like the board members and the CEO have the responsibility to work together to make good decisions on behalf of the company, so also husbands and wives have the responsibility to work together to make good decisions for their family here on earth.

Another example is that of communication. Much like the board room, communication is needed to make good decisions in a marriage. Communication should go on between husbands and wives when it comes to decisions.

The comparison also shows the submission of the wife when spouses disagree. Although the board has a lot of power, the clear lines of authority will cause the board to submit to the authority of the CEO when a difficult decision needs to be made. So also, the wife will submit to her husband when a decision must be made because she realizes that he has this authority from God.

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<sup>103</sup> Conference of Presidents, *Role of Man and Woman*, 21.

<sup>104</sup> Emerson Eggerichs, *Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires, The Respect He Desperately Needs* (Nashville, TN : Colorado Springs, Colo: Integrity Publishers ; Focus on the Family, 2004), 221.

The CEO understands that to lead a business well, he must listen to all the input to make a good decision. He understands that he does not have all the answers himself. He also understands that there will be times when he must make the tough decision. Much the same can be said of the husband. 1 Peter 3:21 explains that husbands will show respect to his wife. Ephesians 5:28,29 talks about a man loving his wife as he loves himself. Each of these passages illustrate the importance of a husband showing proper respect and honor to his wife by listening to her when difficult decisions need to be made.

Many times the CEO may make a decision that will require more work on his part because of the input given to him. He saw that the decision was best for all in the company. In much the same way, the husband will listen to all the input that is given and may have to make a difficult choice that will mean more work for him. However, after weighing all the options, he will realize that it is the best for the family. The husband is willing to sacrifice his own time and talents in order to make sure that the family is well taken care of. This is servant leadership.

God realized the many things that could go wrong if he did not assign the responsibility for leadership and submission in his Word. One need only look at the common arguments of today to see that without a leader in the family, stalemates can occur because no one is ultimately responsible to make the decisions.

If God does not assign this role to the husband, the leadership of the family comes down to little more than a power struggle between spouses.

### **Other Roles in Scripture**

Looking at the attacks against God's roles for marriage, we noted there were those in the Reformation group (claiming a high view of Scripture) who disagreed that these roles for marriage still apply to us today. In his wisdom, God laid down many roles for people of all times to live and abide by in thanks to him. Some of those roles show leadership, or authority. God intends his roles for marriage to be followed in the same way he expects other roles to be followed.

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God”

(Romans 13:1). In this passage, a Christian person is given the role to live as a citizen in his or her country and to “submit himself to the governing authority.”

Ephesians 6:1-4 lists a number of roles.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Here we see the role God has given for Christian children, to live their faith by obeying their parents and honoring them, including the promise which is attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Exodus 20:12. Fathers, as the spiritual leaders of the family, are to lead the children to Jesus and to make sure they are spiritually trained.

Most Christians do not question that there are roles established in the Bible. However, many people who call themselves Christian still question the role of man and woman. The devil is hard at work attacking the biblical foundation of the roles of man and woman trying to undermine them in any way he can.

## **Research**

As I researched the of God’s roles for man and woman in marriage, including sources in literature and internet searches, I was seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the biblical aspects of God’s roles and the attacks of the devil against them.

There is an area of research that is not found in books or internet research. A very practical question needed to be asked, “Is there confusion in WELS marriages about God’s roles of man and woman?”

I sought to answer this question in three ways. The first was merely talking with friends, married couples and pastors to get their opinions on whether the roles of man and woman in marriage was an issue that married couples struggle with. From this informal approach there was enough anecdotal evidence to continue with further research.

Next, I developed a survey which was sent to a number of WELS married couples. This survey was taken by husband and wife privately.<sup>105</sup> The questions were the same for both the husbands and the wives. They were asked if they were confused about the issue, to rate

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<sup>105</sup> Survey is listed in Appendix A: Couple’s Survey.



themselves on their ability to apply God’s roles in their lives, to give feedback on what jobs they fulfill in the household and if their upbringing helped or hindered their current thoughts on the role of man and woman. Each of the questions had space for comments to add insights to the material that I had given them.

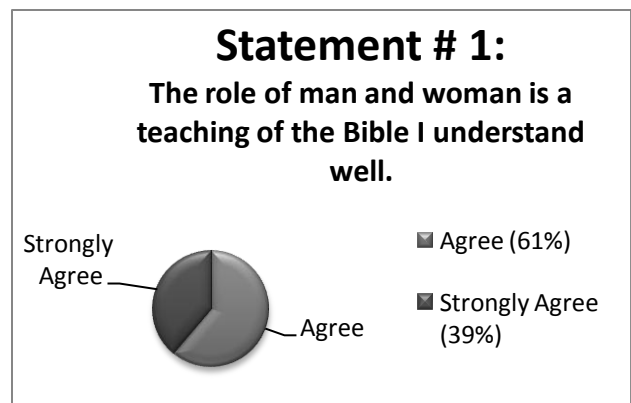
This survey was intended to have the individuals look at themselves, solidify a definition for God’s roles that they use on a daily basis and rate how they follow this role. It was also intended to get them thinking about the role itself and applying that role in their life.

Finally, I utilized a survey of pastors for their thoughts on the struggles of understanding and applying God’s roles.<sup>106</sup> This survey was conducted on-line. It included a mixture of open and closed questions for the pastors to answer. It asked the pastors if they included God’s roles for man and woman in pre-marriage counseling, if they saw struggles among God’s people they ministered to and if they had any helpful advice to deal with the situation.

### **An Overview of the Findings of the Research**

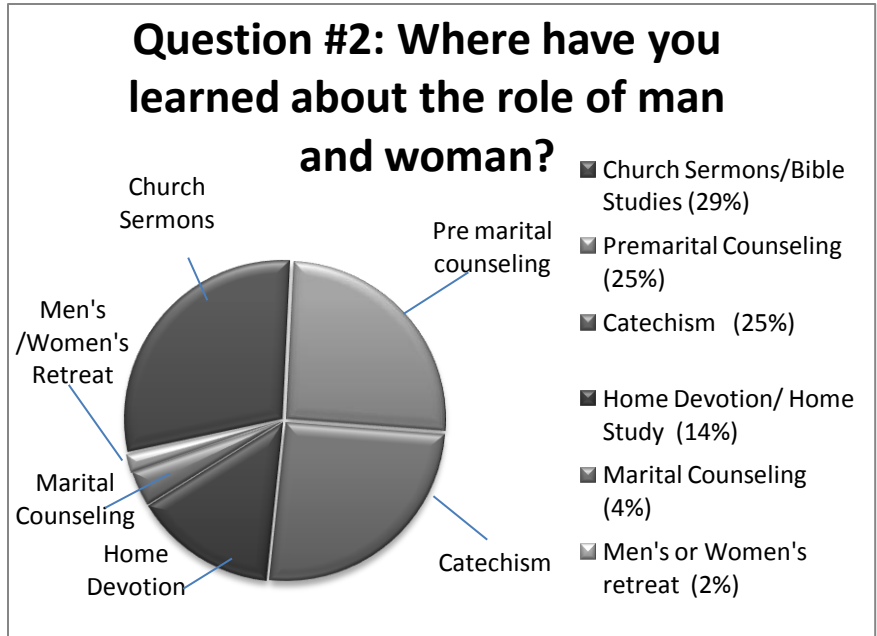
Virtually all the references that I read focused on a key theme: Christians are struggling to apply God’s roles for man and woman in their marriages. The research looked at a number of issues relating to that key theme of the reference materials.

First, I asked the respondents to rate themselves on how well they understood the role of man and woman. I gave four choices: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree. 100% of the men and women surveyed either Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they understood the doctrine of the role of man and woman.



<sup>106</sup> Survey is listed in Appendix A: Pastor’s Survey.

The couples were asked where they learned about the role of man and woman for marriage. The choices were pre-marital counseling, marital counseling, church sermons, Bible studies, home devotions/study, catechism and men's and women's retreats. Pre-marital counseling, church sermons and catechism classes were chosen the most. Later in the survey many of the



respondents noted strong examples coming from their own parents.

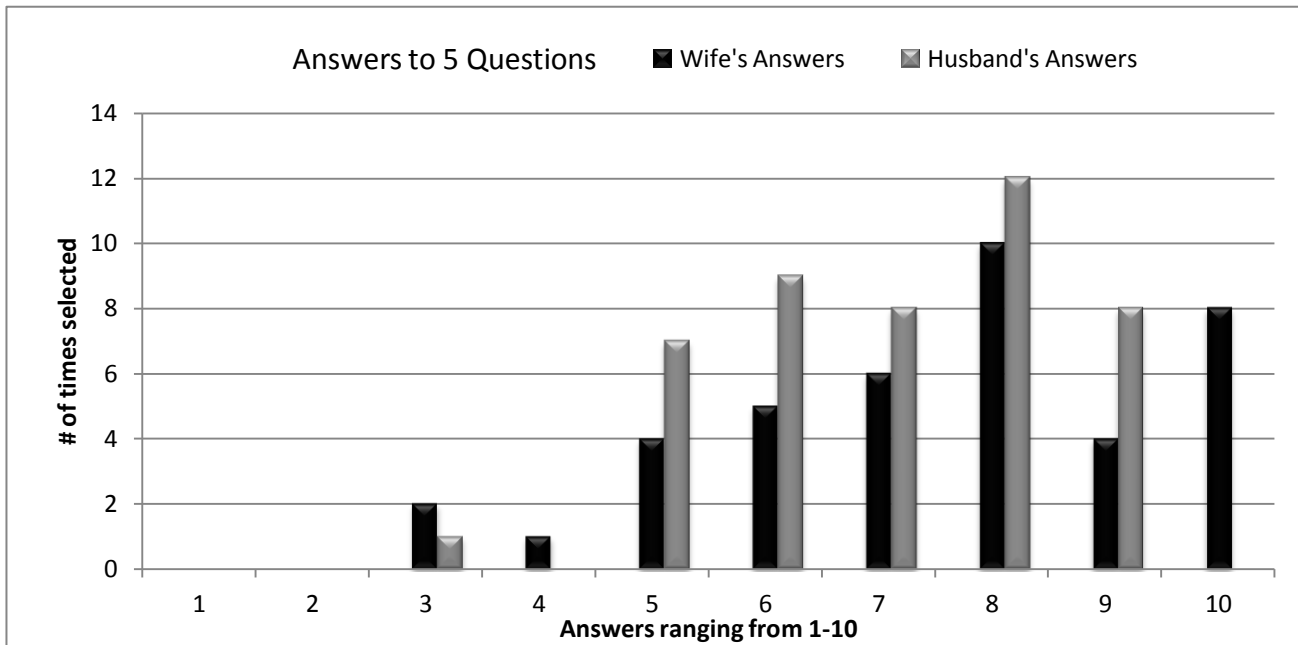
I asked the respondents to rate themselves on how they felt they were carrying out their role in their marriage. I gave 5 statements to men and 5 to women and asked them to rate themselves 1-10, 1 being the worst, 10 the best. The results show that the respondents felt they are doing well in areas they were questioned about. 6, 7 and 8 were chosen 60% of the time

The 5 statements varied slightly between men and women. The statements that men were asked to rate themselves on were:

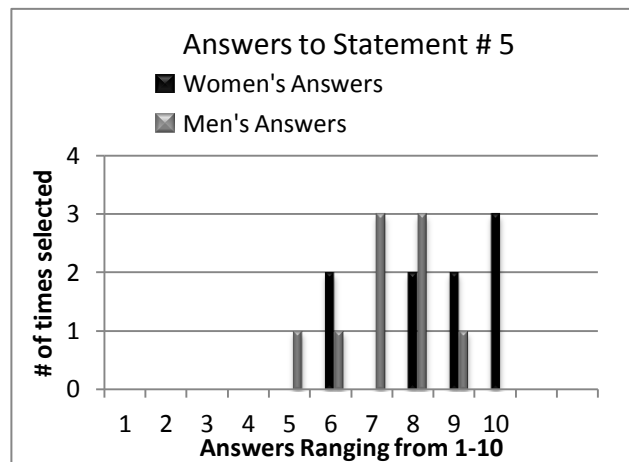
1. Encouraging/Supporting of wife's role on the family
2. Spiritual head of the household
3. Love wife as Christ loved the church
4. Ability to listen to concerns
5. God-pleasing decision making.

The statements that women were asked to rate themselves on were:

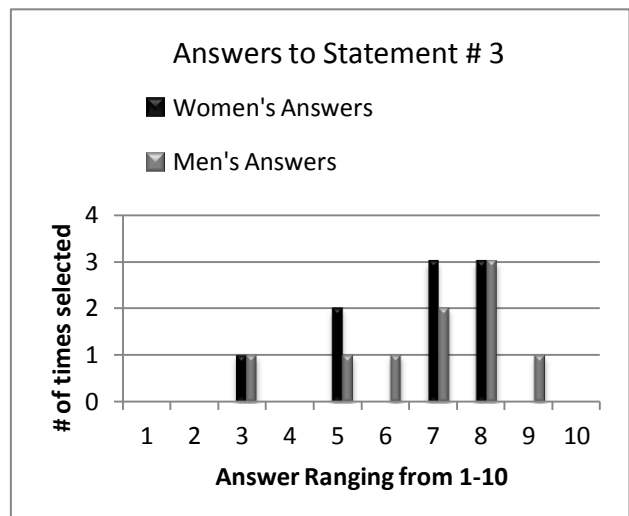
1. Encouraging/Supporting of husband's role in the family
2. Comfortable with God-given "lesser" role
3. Submits to husband as the church to Christ
4. Ability to share concerns in a respectful way
5. Supporting of God-pleasing decisions made



The greatest statistical difference was in the answer to statement 5 which dealt with the decisions of the household. Women rated themselves as an 8 in their ability to be supportive of decisions in the household while men rated themselves only as a 7 in their ability to make decisions in the household.



Statement 3 dealt with the roles of leadership and helpmate in the marriage. Women rated themselves as a 7 in their ability to submit to their husbands as the church does to Christ while the men rated their ability to love their wives as Christ loved the church only a 6.



I asked about the household income. I wanted to see if the financial make-up of the respondents was “traditional” in nature<sup>107</sup> or “non-traditional”.<sup>108</sup>

94% of those surveyed had a two income household. Only one rated their household as having the husband being the “sole” income<sup>109</sup> in the household.

Of those 94 % surveyed with two incomes, 38% indicated that the husband’s income was primary while 29% said that the

wife’s income was primary. Finally, 29% said that their incomes were equal.

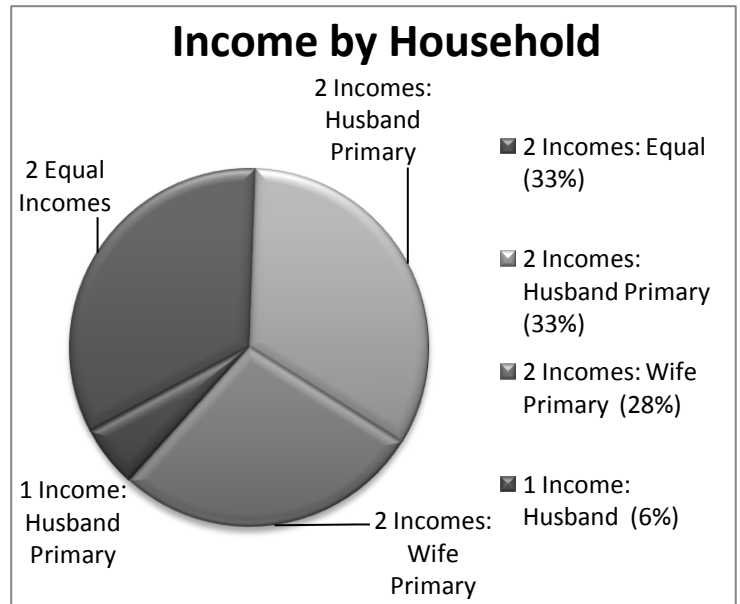
The surveys showed the household duties were generally shared between husband and wife based on likes and dislikes and the amount of time available. One respondent commented:

The duties were determined a few ways based on how they fit each person’s experience and knowledge, timing and work schedule, preference for how it is done, ability to accomplish certain tasks at the same time, likes and dislikes. At times, it wasn’t necessarily a conscious choice...one person did it a few times and it worked therefore continued to handle that duty. Some duties made more sense to fit with one versus the other...like banking and paying the bills fits with the primary income. Others just fit with male versus female personalities...men usually don’t like clothes shopping.<sup>110</sup>

The surveys also indicated that, where there were children in the family, the care of the children was also a shared duty between parents ranging from a 50/50 split to 70/30.

Finally, I asked about the decision making process. A word that came up again and again was “discuss”. Many of the responders talked about how important communication was for husband and wife to function in their roles.

Lots of discussion; pros & cons list; face to face communication with later email communication (always beneficial to talk face to face, but emails often allow us to carefully explain what we are trying to say and allow us to revisit any points that we had in mind but failed to bring up in the discussion); ultimately, the final decision is made by



<sup>107</sup> One income with father as the primary source of income.

<sup>108</sup> Dual income and/or wife primary source of income

<sup>109</sup> 6% of households surveyed.

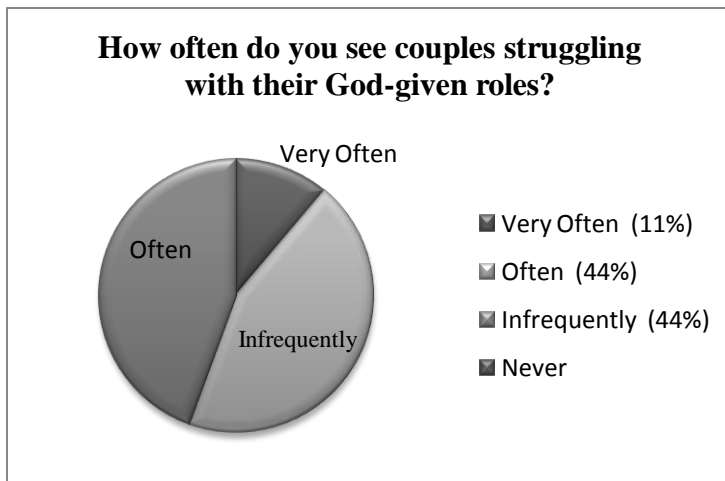
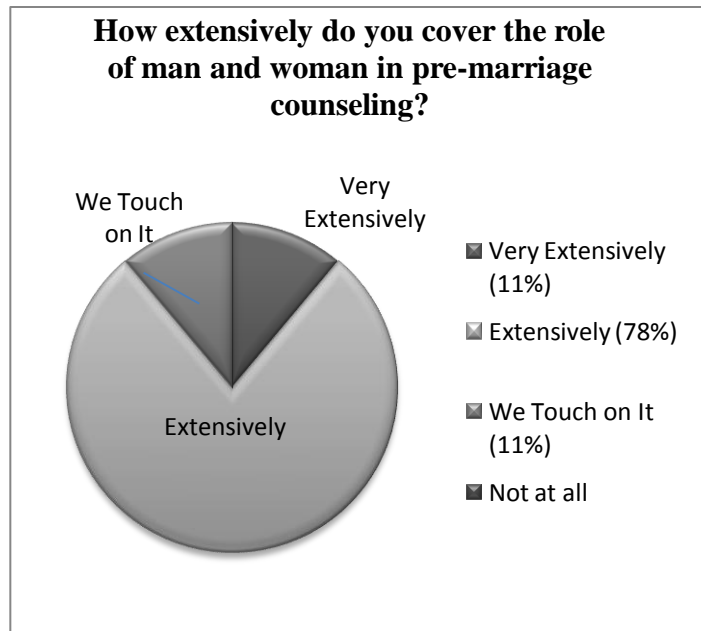
<sup>110</sup> Survey 1CHusS response to question, “How do you determine who would do which duties?”

me as a husband - but that is not one that is arrived at quickly or without a great deal of listening, respecting, and communicating with my wife.<sup>111</sup>

Another said:

We simply discuss it. I feel [my husband] truly does listen to me and takes my feelings and concerns to heart.<sup>112</sup>

The other portion of my research included the survey of the pastors' views on how the married couples in their congregations are applying God's roles in a changing society. I asked the pastors how extensively they cover the role of man and woman in their pre-marriage counseling. 89% of the pastors responded that they covered it extensively or very extensively. Ephesians chapter 5 was mentioned many times as part of the content for those classes.



I asked the pastors how often they saw couples struggling to apply God's roles in their marriages. 55% responded with often or very often, while 44% said infrequently.

<sup>111</sup> Survey 2 NHusB response to question, " Briefly describe the process you and your spouse follow to handle major family decisions"

<sup>112</sup> Survey 14 KWifS response to question, " Briefly describe the process you and your spouse follow to handle major family decisions"

I asked what areas of the home life are being affected by not applying these roles. A number of pastors responded that a key area was fathers not functioning in their role as the home and spiritual leader. This pastor's quote struck me:

Leadership - trying to work together is hard. One [husband or wife] usually just tries to assume control and the other becomes submissive incorrectly, regardless of gender.<sup>113</sup>

All the pastors surveyed felt that society was causing problems in the application of the roles of man and woman to one degree or another.

While I'm not aware of any way to do such measuring in regards to living the roles of man and woman in marriage, I am certain society is a huge negative influence on this. Consider the message in our culture that men and women are interchangeable because they are so equal. That message has been pushed by society long and hard enough that we appear on the verge of adopting homosexual relationships as equal to marriage. To maintain a distinction between the roles of man and woman in marriage when society itself has turned a blind eye towards them is a real challenge.<sup>114</sup>

[It ]Really [is]! When you watch TV shows and commercials, who is always the stupid person in the family? DAD! It's okay not to be married and have kids. "Woman" you are probably better off because men are dead beats. Have you seen the new shows about stay at home dads? The government pushing equality. I could go[on] but the bottom line is that Satan is active in all parts of life trying to destroy the family.<sup>115</sup>

Society stands in direct opposition to the way that Scripture defines the roles of man and of woman. Those who adopt all or part of the world's definition will struggle. Those who hold to God's direction will not struggle nearly as much.<sup>116</sup>

The pastors also listed a greater focus on finances, the stress of jobs and the economy, spiritual ignorance and/or weakness and a backlash against anti-Scriptural practices of the role of man and woman in the past as other factors contributing to problems in the application of the role of man and woman today.

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<sup>113</sup> Survey Pastor #2 in response to the question, "In what areas of their home life do you see couples struggling with applying the role of man and woman?"

<sup>114</sup> Survey Pastor #4 in response to the question, "How much do you think society is harming a husband and wife's ability to apply the role of man and woman in their household?"

<sup>115</sup> Survey Pastor #7 in response to the question, "How much do you think society is harming a husband and wife's ability to apply the role of man and woman in their household?"

<sup>116</sup> Survey Pastor #8 in response to the question, "How much do you think society is harming a husband and wife's ability to apply the role of man and woman in their household?"

Finally, I asked the pastors what advice and counsel they would give to couples struggling in their roles. All of the pastors referenced returning to Scripture as the key component for those struggling with applying God's roles in their lives. Other practical suggestions were: home devotions, spending time together and being satisfied with the role that God has given to you.

### **Analysis of the Research**

I was looking for an answer to three questions in my research. The first, "Are WELS couples struggling to apply the role of man and woman in their homes?" The second, "If they are, how much are they struggling to apply it?" Finally, "If they are not struggling in those roles, what is helping them to understand and apply them?"

My research showed that there is no simple answer to the first question, "Are WELS couples struggling to apply the role of man and woman in their homes?" Rather there was a mixture of results.

The research indicates that households are changing. It is very common for a wife to have the primary income or for the husband and the wife to share the responsibility with the income. One pastor notes:

It is nearly impossible for a woman to be a stay-at-home mom beyond the grade school years of children. Cell phones, internet access, and cable/satellite TV all come at an extremely high cost – and all were free or inexpensive in the past.<sup>117</sup> Tuition for high school and college is through the roof.<sup>118</sup>

The research also indicates that there is a change in dynamics within the household. Husbands and wives now share many of the household duties including cleaning, cooking, banking and childcare.

Many husbands and wives have studied and/or discussed the role of man and woman in marriage and pastors have spent significant time explaining in pre-marriage counseling. The couples surveyed were hearing the message that God's role of man and woman is important to their marriage. The research also indicated that the couples were taking advantage of opportunities to learn more about their roles.

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<sup>117</sup> Phone access and over-air TV

<sup>118</sup> Survey Pastor #8 in response to the question, "Other than the shift in the values of society, what other factors have caused a shift in the role of man and woman in the home"

While the survey results indicated that the couples interviewed understood the doctrine of the role of man and woman in marriage, some respondents, and the pastors interviewed, indicated that couples still experience tension in applying the teaching. We will look more at this difference later. The couples commented on their tension.

The only area of tension that I personally feel is the process of making a final decision. When both persons involved have strong opinions that differ from the other's it is difficult for a final decision to be made that leaves both feeling content and trusting. There is a struggle in exercising the wisdom to listen to the other and recognizing the good in what is being said, while at the same time going in a different direction. The process of how to make a final decision is always one that is beneficial for us to revisit.<sup>119</sup>  
[Husband]

I didn't like the word submit, but when I found out what it really means I am ok with it now. I think that decisions should be equal though<sup>120</sup>[Wife]

I [have a job] with a large income. I was very independent before being married, and know that I have not always adjusted to being a "supporter". In addition, in our family right now we are both working, and I don't always understand my husband's desire to work outside the home when we are both providers and I make more money. We did a trial of him staying home for 6 months, and in the end, I think we settled into that well. But now we are both working, sharing, taking care of our 1.5 children and sharing household chores. It's not a perfect situation now, and we're not sure which direction to go in. He struggled with being a "stay at home dad" and didn't feel he was providing for the family - but I loved it when he stayed home! (And so did our daughter). Now with another one on the way we're looking at him staying home again with the baby and sending out older daughter to daycare still.<sup>121</sup> [Wife]

I am getting more comfortable with understanding the various roles...looking past the secular "clichés" of man/woman roles. If each carries their role as God intended there is not the "Lording over" as the secular world makes it seem.<sup>122</sup>[Wife]

I could be much better with family devotions and leading spiritually at home.<sup>123</sup>[Husband]

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<sup>119</sup> Survey 2 NHusB in response to the question, "Do you feel tension and/or confusion in your household when it comes to your God-given role?"

<sup>120</sup> Survey 15 LWifW in response to the question, "Do you feel tension and/or confusion in your household when it comes to your God-given role?"

<sup>121</sup> Survey 13 AWifP in response to the question, "Do you feel tension and/or confusion in your household when it comes to your God-given role?"

<sup>122</sup> Survey 17 KWifB in response to the question, "Do you feel tension and/or confusion in your household when it comes to your God-given role?"

<sup>123</sup> Survey 3 BHusP in response to the question, "Do you feel tension and/or confusion in your household when it comes to your God-given role?"



The pastor's survey also indicates that while there is agreement with the doctrine, pastors still see married couples who question how to apply this doctrine in a God-pleasing way in their homes.

Taking a woman out of the home has pushed pressure upon both husband and wife when it comes to the way a household operates.<sup>124</sup>

All too often the spiritual leadership in the home ends up being done by the mom. Which is fine if the dad is not around nor a believer, but not fine when he is a believer.<sup>125</sup>

Many dads let mom "take care" of church.<sup>126</sup>

I have not seen it very much in the form of people coming to me for counseling about this issue. However, I see it clearly and often in observing how the married members interact with their spouses and how they talk about and deal with situations. As an example, when I had a Bible study on this topic some married couples specifically didn't come because they didn't want to hear what the Bible says.<sup>127</sup>

The answers to the original three questions are not simple to quantify. Do WELS families struggle to apply the role of man and woman in their households? The WELS couples interviewed indicated they understood the roles that God had given them, but still experienced some tension in applying those roles in their lives. The pastors, who counsel a much wider range of couples, indicated that the role of man and woman was an issue that they saw quite often that was causing problems in marriage.

The second question, "How much are they struggling?", is also not easy to quantify. The research indicates the answer varies from one household to another. While the respondents voiced tension, or struggles, none of them voiced opposition to the teaching. Once again, in answer to this question the pastors saw struggles.

A possible answer area that could help clarify how much couples struggle may also in the experience of the pastors, and the couples they counsel, and the experience of the focus group. While the focus group was made up of strong WELS families who are consistent in their church

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<sup>124</sup> Survey Pastor #8 in response to the question, "Other than the shift in the values of society, what other factors have cause a shift in the role of man and woman in the home

<sup>125</sup> Survey Pastor #6 in response to the question, "How often do you see married couples struggling with their God-given roles?"

<sup>126</sup> Survey Pastor #7 in response to the question, "How often do you see married couples struggling with their God-given roles?"

<sup>127</sup> Survey Pastor #4 in response to the question, "How often do you see married couples struggling with their God-given roles?"

and Bible-study attendance, the pastors have a much broader scope of people who have varying degrees of understanding and knowledge of the Bible.

While some respondents voiced those struggles, it was encouraging to see that these Christian couples had the foundation of their marriages built on the solid foundation of God's Word and that the roles of man and woman were solidly grounded in that Word. The research indicated that the couples did not struggle with the teaching as much as the application of that teaching for their daily lives.

Finally, the third question, "What is helping them apply these roles?" That pastors and couples had similar thoughts: Focusing on God's Word helped them define the roles in their marriage, apply those roles in their everyday life and even work through the struggles.

The research indicated that a strong home life, where the roles were modeled by the couples' own fathers and mothers in a proper way, along with a strong teaching of the doctrine by pastors and teachers, have helped the couples build their relationships on the rock of God's Word.

Finally, the research indicated that communication was very important in applying those roles properly.

It is important to note that all the respondents were chosen because they have solid Christian homes and attend church regularly.<sup>128</sup> The answers might vary had another group of couples been chosen that were more typical of the average WELS congregation.

### **Applying God's Roles in Marriage**

While it can be said that society is pushing men to be more "in tune with their feminine side" and that women are fighting for and finding equality in what was once a male-dominated work-force, these types of societal changes do not affect the biblical roles God has given for husbands and wives in marriage.

The Bible passages and sections listed in the *Biblical Principles* portion of this thesis are prescriptive of the roles that God has given, however they are not necessarily descriptive as to every action and decision a Christian husband and wife must make in their household.

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<sup>128</sup> This is a generalization based upon the written comments and answers to the first 4 questions of the survey and the background of the respondents from personal interaction with them.

There are literally thousands of ways that husbands and wives can work together in their households and families to follow the roles God has given to them. It is important to note that struggles arising in following and applying God's roles for man and woman in a marriage, may be due to the fact that a Christian man and woman are honestly trying to apply God's will in their lives. However, the attacks of the devil do affect husband and wife and struggles arise as a result of the sinful nature fighting against what God has said.

The best piece of advice and counsel for husbands and wives seeking to apply God's roles in their life comes from the pastors' survey. All of the pastors gave the advice that a husband and wife should be in the Word with a regular use of the Word and Sacraments.

Attend church together regularly<sup>129</sup>

Spend time daily in Scripture!!!! As you grow spiritually you will see the absolute importance of your role.<sup>130</sup>

I would point them to Christ. That is ultimately what the Holy Spirit himself does through Paul in Ephesians 5. Applying these roles to marriage is a fruit of faith. Thus faith in Christ is essential to growing in this area of sanctification. Seeing the roles of husband and wife in the light of Christ's relationship to the church not only helps us to understand the roles properly, but gives us the strength to do so. Obviously I would, as I have done in working with couples, tailor such a presentation to the particular needs of the couple and the particular way in which they are struggling with their roles. But the heart of it all is presenting the gospel as the power of God and the law of the roles as a guide for our thankful living.<sup>131</sup>

Being in the Word includes more than just worship on Sunday morning. As the pastors from the survey suggested "in the Word" also includes Bible Study privately and publicly in the home and at church. Being "in the Word" includes being regular in church attendance and in the use of the Lord's Supper. A husband surveyed spoke of the importance for his life of spiritual growth:

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<sup>129</sup> Survey Pastor #9 in response to the question, "What advice would you give a husband and wife who are struggling in their roles?"

<sup>130</sup> Survey Pastor #7 in response to the question, "What advice would you give a husband and wife who are struggling in their roles?"

<sup>131</sup> Survey Pastor #4 in response to the question, "What advice would you give a husband and wife who are struggling in their roles?"

I have sat through classes, bible studies, and even taught a course about it but I feel that as another day of marriage comes each morning I need to revisit biblical principles in my continued studies.<sup>132</sup>

Being “in the Word” is the best way that a husband and wife can build a foundation for their marriage which will thank and praise their Savior. It will also bring them to a better understanding of what Paul is talking about in Ephesians when he says, “Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church” and, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”

Being “in the Word” will remind us that in those moments when we are not happy in our role as a husband or a wife, it’s not the heart of the new man speaking. This is the heart of the old Adam. Being “in the Word” will teach both husband and wife that there is much more at stake in following God’s roles than merely having a home that functions. The Word will remind them that, when either the husband or the wife steps out of their role, they are letting down their spouse, and they are letting down their Savior who gave them their roles.

Being in the Word will show the error of sin, especially when we hear what God says in his Word but don’t agree with it or don’t want to follow it. Being in the Word will provide constant reassurance for the Christian of the Gospel message that there is forgiveness for the sin of not living in our God-given role. Then seeing what God has done for us through Jesus, we will seek to lead a life of thanks to him by following and living in the role he has given us.

There are many ways to study the roles of man and woman. Being in the Word in church and at home are two of those ways. There are also many resources that will help a couple grow in their personal understanding of the roles for their marriage.

John Brug’s Bible study *A Bible Study on Man and Woman in God’s World* walks through many of the principles of the role of man and woman as God has outlined them in the Bible. This could be used as a short Bible study to focus directly on the roles God has given in the marriage.

The writings of Wayne Grudem are another resource for couples. While Grudem is not from WELS circles, he has written several books and articles that point out the proper roles of

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<sup>132</sup> Survey Survey 2 NHusB in response to the question, “The role of man and woman is a teaching of the Bible that I understand well. Comments.”

man and woman as God has given them to us in the Bible. He walks through the major biblical sections that deal with the role of man and woman and clearly explains how a husband and wife can apply those roles in their lives.

In a Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary winterim course entitled *Heirs Together: A Study of the Role of Man and Woman*, Professor Richard Gurgel has taken some of Grudem's writings and has incorporated them into the course content. *Wives Like Sarah, and the Husbands Who Honor Them* and *A Biblical Vision of Manhood and Womanhood* are examples of Grudem's titles. These articles would be helpful Bible studies for pre-marriage seminars, marriage retreats or as simplified Bible studies for a husband and wife to work through to help them live within their God-given roles.

Another resource for a husband or wife seeking to praise God by loving their spouse and fulfilling their role properly is *Love and Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. This book is extremely helpful in understanding many aspects of marriage. It presents God's roles, both leadership and submission, as blessings from the Lord. It uses Ephesians 5:33, "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband," as the basis for teaching husbands and wives how to love and respect each other in God-pleasing, practical ways.

It was refreshing to read this book which allowed God to give us his wisdom in the roles for man and woman and then allowed Scripture to stand on that wisdom without excuse. This book leads husbands to appreciate their role of leadership in their marriage and teaches them how to treat their wives with sacrificial and committed love. It leads wives to embrace their role as a blessed helper to their husband and teaches them how to treat their husbands with sacrificial and committed love and respect.

When love and respect are present in a marriage, husbands and wives process things far more wisely. They accept the fact that a degree of conflict is inevitable in a marriage relationship. As the conversation progresses, neither one overstates his or her position. No one "loses it" emotionally. There is give and take..... There is much a husband and wife can do to "mutually submit" to one another through love and respect. But when somebody has to call the shots, the husband is responsible to do it.<sup>133</sup>

No smoothly running organization can have two heads. To set up a marriage with two equals at the head is to set it up for failure. That is one of the big reasons that people are divorcing right and left today. God knew someone had to be in charge, and that is why

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<sup>133</sup> Eggerichs, *Love & Respect*, 219, 220.

Scripture clearly teaches that, in order for things to work, the wife is called upon to defer to her husband.<sup>134</sup>

Another powerful, piece of advice is to pray. When we see the sin of not following the roles God has given to us in marriage, our reaction must be to ask God (and our spouse) to forgive us for that sin. Then in the light of forgiveness we have through Jesus, we pray that God would give us the strength and the courage to live a new life of thanks to God, following his guidelines for the roles he has set up for us in our marriage.

Prayers can also ask that God would help us be a better husband or wife, be a more attentive leader or a better helper in the household. We also need to ask the Lord to help us focus on our own role rather than our spouse's. Finally, we pray for a willingness to thank him for what he has done for us by loving our spouse in a committed and sacrificial way.

In this new life of thanks our attitude is like that of Christ loving the church. Each husband has been given an awesome responsibility to love his wife as Christ loved the church, even being willing to give himself up for her. Each wife then has the great blessing of being under the leadership of her husband as the church has the blessing of being under the leadership of Christ.<sup>135</sup>

A man's love for God and his sacrificial love for his wife will lead him to listen to his wife when a difference of opinion arises. It will lead him to seek his wife's advice and counsel, listen to her thoughts, troubles and fears and take those things into account in the decision-making process. It will also show itself in his not seeking to serve himself, but in sacrificing for the sake of his wife and family. His committed love to his wife will show itself by being willing to make hard decisions for his wife and family, even if that means personal sacrifice, more work or responsibility for him.

Another aspect of this committed and sacrificial love is a husband and wife treating each other with the proper love and respect. "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 Peter 3:7).

Focusing on the first phrase of this passage we see some special advice God gives for men to live by in relation to their wives. "Husbands in the same way be considerate as you live

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<sup>134</sup> Eggerichs, *Love & Respect*, 221.

<sup>135</sup> Emerson Eggerichs, *Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires, the Respect He Desperately Needs* (Nashville, TN : Colorado Springs, Colo: Integrity Publishers ; Focus on the Family, 2004) 206.

with your wives.” This phrase can be translated literally, “Men in the same way, be living according to knowledge with your wife as (she is) the weaker vessel.” The word that is translated in the NIV as “considerate” and in the literal translation as “knowledge” is the word *γνώσιν* from the root *γνώσις*. This word literally means knowledge gained from the eye, experience, or by objective observation.<sup>136</sup>

What will *living in knowledge* look like in a marriage? How will it help us to live in the roles that God gives to us?

In his love for his God and his wife, the husband will realize that his wife has been blessed by God with many gifts and blessings, while at the same time having faults and limitations. He will seek to support his wife in her hobbies, interests and pursuits. He will seek to find ways that her abilities and gifts can be used as blessings in their marriage, to bring joy to both of them.

He will also realize that his wife has her limitations. In his love for her and his knowledge of her, he will focus on her abilities and gifts and seek to find the correct balance of duties for his family.

A quote that was already used in this thesis deserves to be repeated in this section because it is a great example of a husband living in knowledge with his wife.

The duties were determined by a few ways based on how they fit each person’s experience and knowledge, timing and work schedule, preference for how it is done, ability to accomplish certain tasks at the same time, likes and dislikes. At times it wasn’t necessarily a conscious choice...one person did it a few times and it worked therefore continued to handle that duty. Some duties made more sense to fit with one versus the other...like banking and paying the bills fits with the primary income. Others just fit with male versus female personalities...men usually don’t like clothes shopping.<sup>137</sup>

While it may not have even been a conscious decision, this husband has seen the value of not demanding or forcing his wife into duties she cannot perform. He has seen the blessing of finding the duties that fit her gifts and abilities while at the same time finding duties that fit his own gifts and abilities. The rest of the duties are open to discussion and compromise.

The husband will do all of these things not with selfish motivation for what he will receive from his wife, nor out of an attempt to “bribe” his wife by being good to her so that she

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<sup>136</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey William Bromiley. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985).

<sup>137</sup> Survey 1CHusS response to question, “How do you determine who would do which duties?”

will love him. Rather, he will do all of this out of faith, thanking his Savior for the grace given to him, by giving humble love and service to his wife.

A husband will also seek to lead with a committed love that is willing to sacrifice and serve his wife as Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself for it.

Ray Stedman states that today's men often have a problem with correct Christ-like leadership in their homes. They abdicate that leadership role to their wives:

If the man does not exert leadership at all, then the wife must take it on, thereby forcing the woman to assume a role for which she is not made, and, as I have already suggested, she does not basically and essentially desire. One way men do this is by lopsided leadership. They feel that their major concern is to make a living, and it is the wife's job to run the home. They give their whole attention to the business of acquiring material gain, of making money so they can provide the comforts of modern life for their family. Most American men do a very commendable job along this line. They take this responsibility (properly part of the responsibility of marriage) very seriously, but they leave the rest of it to their wives. This, frequently, engenders the attitude, "I let my wife decide whether the children are to go to Sunday school and church. That's her job." The moral values of the home are left for the woman to incorporate. A slice of life is made of primary male concern while the rest of life, with great and important values within it, is left wholly for the woman. But this is a denial of what Peter suggests in these very brief, pregnant words -- that man's first responsibility is to exercise intelligent leadership. Men must act in knowledge, he says, and choose intelligently what comes into their homes.<sup>138</sup>

God has given the leadership role in the family to the man. The man must embrace this role to fulfill the primary responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the house. In the same way, a wife lives in thanks to her Savior by embracing her role of helpmate that God has given.

In her love for her God and her husband, a wife will seek to support her husband in what he does. Much like the husband is to be committed and sacrificial in his service to his wife, the wife is to be committed and sacrificial in her service to her husband as a God-given helpmate on this earth.

In much the same way that the husband should not expect and demand what the wife cannot give, so the wife should not scold or nag her husband to become something that he cannot be. When issues of leadership come up in the household, in her love for her Savior, she will seek to give her advice and counsel in a respectful way allowing her husband to hear her concerns, hopes, needs and wants. The wife trusts that the husband, who loves her in a committed and

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<sup>138</sup> Ray Stedman, "What Every Husband Should Know | 1 Peter 3:7 | RayStedman.org," *Ray Stedman. Org Authentic Christianity*, last modified January 31, 1965, accessed November 14, 2013, <http://www.raystedman.org/thematic-studies/christian-living/what-every-husband-should-know>.



sacrificial way, will do what is best for the family. If her husband has weak leadership skills she will build him up in those leadership skills rather than taking the reins herself. In her attitude of thanks to her Savior she will continue to bring him back to the biblical roles.<sup>139</sup>

A wife's love for God and her husband will lead her to support her husband when his leadership position involves a decision on his part and a submission on her part. It will lead her, even if she disagrees with the decision made, to accept the decision, trusting that God has led her husband to make the decision in the best interest of the family.

The wife will do all of these things not with the selfish motivation for what she will receive from her husband, nor out of an attempt to manipulate her husband into giving up his leadership position. Rather, she will do all of this out of faith, thanking her Savior for the grace given to her, trusting that the Lord will protect and bless her.

Some picture God's roles of man and woman in marriage as being similar to the way a football team operates. All the players are working toward the same goal of scoring the touchdown and winning the game. The same can be said of the marriage. Husband and wife are both working towards the same goal of praising and thanking God with their marriage and providing for the earthly needs of their family.

All the players are very important in the process. All the players have input in the team meetings. Husband and wife discuss the many aspects of their life and seek the best decisions and outcomes for their families. They may realize there are areas they need to work on to make their family stronger. This back and forth communication is essential

If the team is not asked for input they will quickly dislike the quarterback and feel that he is playing only for himself. The same can be said for a marriage. A husband always needs to make sure that his wife is part of that process of decision making and planning for the family. If the wife is not part of the decision making and planning process, she will begin to feel unappreciated and may begin to dislike her role and resent her husband.

Yet, when the game is going on, not all the players get to call the plays. The quarterback is the last line of the chain of command on the field. The linemen, running backs and receivers all have input in meetings, but ultimately the quarterback calls the play and is in charge of making sure that it goes well. Similarly, the husband has been given the quarterback position in the family by God, to make the decision and see that the decision is carried out.

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<sup>139</sup> Eggerichs, *Love & Respect*, 222,223.

Imagine that all the players have equal responsibility and leadership in the huddle. What would happen? Possibilities include voting for a play, running different plays at the same time, not being able to decide on a play, arguments among players and even penalties because the decisions have been delayed or could not be made.

We realize that a football team needs that quarterback to be the leader in the huddle.<sup>140</sup>

God knew that his special gift of marriage would need the declaration of leadership and submission for the good of men and women in their marriages.

As more and more focus is put on the role that God has given to the individual, and with further Bible study, we begin to see how God has blessed the man and woman in their individual roles.

Husbands and wives can also seek to live in their roles properly by focusing on their own roles more than on their spouse's role. "How can I love and serve my God and my [spouse] by living within my role?" is a much better question for a Christian to ask themselves than, "How can my [spouse] live in his/her role better?"

All of the pastors in the survey said they dealt with the question of the role of man and woman in their pre-marriage counseling.

A pastor I spoke with had couples discuss their family backgrounds. He asked them what roles their father and mother fulfilled. He asked them to write down what their expectations were for the roles in their own households. They were then to talk about those roles and see how they were similar and different.

This is a great idea for a man and woman preparing for marriage. While duties and responsibilities are often discussed in this conversation before marriage, it is also important to discuss applying the role of man and woman in our everyday duties.

If this was not a pre-marriage counseling topic it is something that can be talked about at any time. If it was discussed during those pre-marriage counseling sessions, it has laid a framework for having communication throughout the marriage and can be revisited as circumstances change in a marriage.

Communication in the decision-making process came up time and again in the couple's surveys. All of the couples interviewed mentioned that discussion of family decisions, duties and responsibilities was of major importance to correctly apply their roles in their home.

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<sup>140</sup> Eggerichs, *Love & Respect*, 221.

Communication will have to occur and duties in the home may have to change if a husband loses his job and finds himself at home more. In this case, after discussion and communication the husband may have to take more household duties on himself if his wife is now the primary earner in the family. Another time when communication and discussion must occur is when children enter the family. At this time, tasks and duties may also change drastically.

Laying the groundwork for proper communication in a marriage is very important. Emotion, anger and frustration often come into play in conversations especially when a husband and wife both feel strongly about an issue. If the groundwork for proper communication has not been laid, then proper application of the role of man and woman will be even harder to achieve. These feelings and emotions can make it difficult for the man to apply his leadership and the woman to be a supportive helpmate. A discussion will end up in a fight where nothing is accomplished and both husband and wife feel frustrated and even more upset.

The Bible is not a playbook for marriage where every aspect of our life is closely scripted. God lays the principle for the roles of man and woman in a marriage in his Word and then he expects us to follow those roles no matter what time, place, age, or situation we live in.

The basic biblical principles will always apply. Both husband and wife are to view each other in the light of their special status as redeemed children of God. Both are to lovingly fulfill their roles, not out of selfish motivation, but in the light of Christ and his example of love, caring submission and sacrifice for his church.

We thank God and honor our spouse by correctly following those roles that God lays out for us in his Word. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor John Schuetze says it this way in his book, *Marriage and Family: The Family Photo Album*:

He (God) doesn't tell men to make sure their wives submit. He doesn't tell wives to make sure their husbands lead. He talks to each group about their particular role. Husbands are to use their leadership roles not to dominate or to abdicate but to serve. And as a wife, the Lord instructs you to be a servant helper. You are to use your helper role to serve God and your husband. (Both husbands and wives) are to serve out of love for the Savior who has already served them with eternal life."<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>John D. Scheutze. *Marriage and Family: The Family Photo Album*. (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2003), 78-82.

## Conclusion

The demands of society will always change. The pendulum swings from a conservative view to a liberal one and then back again to conservative. Because Christians live in society, they will always face differences between how society expects a Christian to act and live and the way God in his Word instructs us to live.

Husbands and wives face the attacks that a changing society places on their roles using God's Word. The fight will not be an easy one.

In his Word, God has given us many prescriptive passages of the roles he expects man and woman to fulfill to make marriage stable, secure and fulfilling. The difficulty for husbands and wives is applying that Word to their lives in a God-pleasing way even though the demands of their households may be changing.

Whatever the household arrangement is; whether the husband or wife is the primary income earner, whether they both work, whether one stays home to watch the children or they use a daycare or whether they have divided all the household duties as equally as possible, God has laid out his roles for man and woman in his Word.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, (Ephesians 5:22,23 & 25,26)<sup>142</sup>

Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

As Christians, we seek to thank our Savior for all he has done for us on the cross. This includes the way we live as husbands and wives. No matter the financial make-up of the household or the divisions of duties between husband and wife, all Christian husbands and wives seek to apply the biblical role of man and woman as God has established it for us in his Word.

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<sup>142</sup> See Ephesians 5:22-33 for the full portion of Scripture

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## Appendix A: Research Surveys

### I. Individual Survey given to Husband and Wife to be completed separately.

#### General Information:

Please indicate who filled out this survey: \_\_\_\_\_ Husband \_\_\_\_\_ Wife

- **The role of man and women is a teaching of the Bible that I understand well.**

Strongly Disagree                      Disagree                      Agree                      Strongly Agree

Comments:

- **Have you had the opportunity to study/discuss the role of man and woman in any of these ways: (Check all that apply)**

_____ Pre-marital counseling	_____ Home Devotional/Study
_____ Marital Counseling	_____ Catechism
_____ Church Sermons/ Bible Studies	_____ Men's /Women's Retreats

Other:

- **Please write God's role for man and woman in your own words.**
- **Evaluate yourself. Please rate yourself in your role (1-10). Add any comments about yourself that you wish. Please only evaluate yourself. Do not evaluate your spouse.**

<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
___ Encouraging/Supportive of wife's role in family	___ Encouraging/ Supportive of husband's role in family
___ Spiritual head of the household	___ Comfortable with God-given "lesser role"
___ Love wife as Christ loved the church	___ Submits to husband as the church to Christ
___ Ability to listen to concerns	___ Ability to share concerns in a respectful way
___ God-pleasing decision-making	___ Supportive of God-pleasing decisions made

Comments:

- **Do you feel tension and/or confusion in your household when it comes to your God-given role? Comment on your answer:**
- **Briefly describe the process you and your spouse follow to handle major family decisions.**



**Family Dynamics:**

- **Please describe the financial make-up of your family:**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 Income; Husband                      \_\_\_\_\_ 1 Income; Wife,  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 Incomes; Husband primary        \_\_\_\_\_ 2 Incomes; Wife primary  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 Equal Incomes  
 Other or Comments:

- **If you have children, which best describes the primary daytime dynamic in your home.**

Mom stays at home                      Dad stays at home                      Share duties                      We use a daycare

- **Who primarily does the chores in the household?**

Please mark with H for Husband W for Wife N for neither or doesn't apply

Please provide a percentage for how often the primary does these chores.

Example: Wife Rotates the tires 75% of the time it needs to be done.

H or W	%	H or W	%
_____ Dishes	_____	_____ Car Maintenance	_____
_____ Lawn	_____	_____ House Maintenance	_____
_____ Gardening	_____	_____ Children's Bedtime	_____
_____ Laundry	_____	_____ Grocery Shopping	_____
_____ Vacuuming	_____	_____ Clothes Shopping	_____
_____ Banking	_____	_____ Pick Child from daycare	_____
_____ Paying bills	_____	_____ Primary caregiver of child	_____

- **How did you determine who would do which duties?**
- **Where do you find a significant difference in this division of household duties as you compare your list to the home in which you grew up?**
- **How has that helped or hindered your role as a husband/wife now?**

As you have had a chance to fill out the survey by yourself, it is my hope that you have gotten some insights you might like to share with your spouse about God's role of man and woman in your household. The information I get from you individually is as important as what I get from you together.

Contact information: email address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B: Pastor's Survey (via Survey Monkey)**

1. In Pre-Marriage counseling, how extensively do you cover the role of man and woman?

Very extensively                      Extensively                      We touch on it                      Not at all

Comments:

2. How often do you see married couples struggling with their God-given roles?

Very Often                      Often                      Infrequently                      Never

Comments:

3. In what areas of their home life do you see couples struggling with applying the role of man and woman?

4. How much do you think society is harming a husband and wife's ability to apply the roles of man and woman in their household?

5. Other than a shift in the values of society, what other factors have caused a shift in the role of man and woman in the home?

6. What advice would you give a husband and wife who are struggling in their roles?

7. Please provide any other thoughts, comments or insight you think might be helpful for me as I study the role of man and woman in today's households.