

God has designed marriage. Therefore, we need to embrace His principles for marriage so that marriage can be most effective and enjoyable. God has given specific roles or responsibilities to husbands and wives. Failure to obey them endangers the well-being of marriage. By nature mankind tends to twist what God wants, not understanding the good which God has created.

Two important Scripture passages address the responsibilities of husbands and wives in marriage: Ephesians 5:22–33 and 1 Peter 3:1–7. The apostle Peter was writing to believers who were facing persecution and trials. Although there was no fairness in the persecution, Peter told his readers to submit to proper authorities. Leading such godly lives will bring glory to God. This includes fulfilling our responsibilities as husbands and wives. God does not intend these responsibilities to be burdens, but to bring blessing.

I. *The Responsibilities of Wives (3:1–6)*

1. *The primary command: a wife should submit to her husband.*
 - a. The command to wives to submit “in the same way” (3:1) looks back to chapter 2 and is comparable to the command to other believers to submit. This submission is a functional relationship and does not imply superiority or inferiority (cf. Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:7).
 - b. Critics of such submission may rightly observe abuse or wrongly react to the principle. Submitting to leaders is difficult because of sin: Leaders are imperfect and sinful. Abuse of leadership entered with the fall of mankind, as well as rebellion against leadership.
 - c. Despite the challenge, this is God’s command, except if it would be sinful (cf. Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18). Obedience of both husband and wife makes it less difficult and offers blessing.
2. *One possible outcome of submission: It could bring about spiritual changes in a disobedient husband.*
 - a. In using Sarah (and Abraham) as an example (3:6) Peter implies that the disobedient husband is a professing believer.
 - b. Peter’s statement is not a guarantee of change, because no one lives perfectly.
3. *Submission is expressed in two ways.*
 - a. Submission expresses itself in behavior and the right attitude. As action “without words” it does not mean absolute silence, but does mean that preaching at the husband or nagging is not the way to persuade. Instead, the “the purity and reverence of [their] lives” is the wife’s most persuasive tool. The wife’s reverence to God is a constant reminder to the husband that there is a holy God watching who wants holy living from His children.
 - b. Submission also expresses itself in the way a wife tries to be attractive. She should emphasize inner beauty rather than outward looks, “the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.” You can estimate your priorities by examining where you spend your time, money or effort. Men can help by appreciating and praising the right things.

II. *The Responsibilities of Husbands (3:7)*

1. *The fundamental attitude of husbands to their wives should be mutual Christian service.*
 - a. The charge to husbands is connected with the previous verses as seen in the words “in the same way” (v 7) and the absence of a new main verb. It connects then back to chapter 2 as well.
 - b. Therefore, the fundamental attitude of a husband to his wife should be mutual Christian service, a submitting of his personal desires to the needs of his wife as he leads, as Peter says in 2:21–25 that Jesus did (John 13:13; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27). (Headship in marriage and the example of Jesus is explained more in Ephesians 5.)
2. *The attitude of Christian service expresses itself in two ways.*
 - a. A husband should live with his wife “according to knowledge” or “in an understanding way.” Husbands need to know their wives. This requires spending time together and learning such things as strengths and weaknesses, encouragements and discouragements, spiritual needs, etc.
 - b. A husband should also treat his wife with respect, that is, honoring her and treating her as valuable.
 - 1) The creation account of man and woman (Genesis 2:18–25) implies that Adam first learned the value of Eve before God made her.
 - 2) This helps explain the sense of the “weaker partner”, or, literally, “weaker vessel.” The word was used literally for household containers and figuratively for the body. In our homes we treat more fragile porcelain dishes carefully, because they are valuable. Men should treat their wives as valuable although physically weaker.
 - 3) Husbands should also honor their wives as “heirs together of the grace of life”. Believing husbands and wives are brothers and sisters in the Lord. Functional differences do not indicate spiritual priority.
 - 4) Husbands who mistreat their wives may be hindered in prayer. Cf. Matthew 5:23–24. Make sure things are right with your believing wife, your sister in Christ, if you don’t want your prayers to be ineffective.

The responsibility of the wife to submit will be less difficult if the husband is leading as he should be. And the responsibility of the husband to lead selflessly and with respect for his wife will be less difficult if she has adorned herself with a gentle and quiet spirit. Though our sinful nature rebels, God by His Spirit enables His children to live victoriously. Live obediently in marriage. Consider carefully the responsibilities before marriage. Whether married or single, pray for one another and encourage one another, for the glory of God.