

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY IN MARRIAGE

Introduction: As we begin the part of our counselling that deals with the roles of husband and wife in the home, let's unpack what roles are, why they are important and lay the foundation for successfully fulfilling our roles in marriage.

In any organization that seeks to accomplish a goal, and has more than one human being involved, there must be roles, a job description, the part each person plays in the overall success of the organization. If we are a part of that organization, it is imperative that we understand our role or part in the organization and the responsibilities that come with that role? Sports teams have roles, positions, and responsibilities. Businesses and companies have roles, CEO, CFO, COO, managers, employees, etc. Governments have roles, President, Vice-President, federal leaders, state leaders, local leaders. Our legal system has roles, attorneys, judges, state supreme courts, federal supreme court. Our schools have roles, principals, teachers then students. Roles are a vital part of any successful organizations or institution.

So, what is a role?

“**ROLE**” as defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary ...

- : a character assigned or assumed.

had to take on the role of both father and mother.

- : a socially expected behavior pattern usually determined by an individual's status in a particular society.

- : a part played by an actor or singer.

- : a function or part performed especially in a particular operation or process.

played a major role in the negotiations.

(“Role.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/role>. Accessed 12 Mar. 2024.)

Roles are simply the part we play in our particular situation. For our study, that situation is the home.

Why are the roles in marriage so important?

Roles include responsibility and accountability. What is my job, my responsibility and who am I accountable to? For more than 20 years I worked in corporate sales both as a salesperson and a sales manager. During that time, I was a part of three different organizations. Regardless of the organization I was working for or the position I held at the time, I was given a job description

and had someone I had to answer to for my performance. In any institution there has to be someone to make decisions and be held accountable for the results. Responsibility and accountability are critical to the success of any institution and that is why understanding our role in the home is so important.

Roles misunderstood:

At this point, let me address a common misunderstanding in the interpretation of the roles of husband and wife relative to responsibility and accountability in the home.

1. **RESPONSIBILITY DOES NOT MEAN DICTATORSHIP** - Just because one person is responsible to make the decision and is held accountable for the result, it does not mean that others are not involved in the decision-making process. Just because the husband is given the responsibility by God for the decisions in the home, it does not mean that the wife and children are not involved in the decision-making process. On the contrary, it would be foolish not to involve them.
2. **RESPONSIBILITY DOES NOT MEAN SUPERIORITY** – Responsibility doesn't mean that the one assigned the responsibility is superior to the other. For our purposes, the husband is not superior to the wife just because God holds him accountable for the decisions in the home. In my experience, the wife, in many cases, is much more knowledgeable about certain things than the husband. For example, the wife is a trained financial investor and accountant while the husband has absolutely no experience with managing money in any situation. While the husband is still held accountable by God for the management of the finances in the home, he would be foolish not to let his wife help make the decisions and probably let her manage the finances. He would be very wise to listen to her when it comes to making those decisions. In this scenario I think we would all agree the wife is the superior money manager though the husband is held accountable.

The fact is the man needs the woman and the woman needs the man. Look what God says:

1 Corinthians 11:11 NLT

But among the Lord's people, women are not independent of men, and men are not independent of women.

1 Corinthians 11:12 NLT

For although the first woman came from man, every other man was born from a woman, and everything comes from God.

Paul puts it simply. **Men and women need each other**. One is not more important than the other. We just have different God-given roles in the home. These roles address our responsibility in the home, not our rank. When we live as God designed us to, life is good and fulfilled. This is why it is so important that we understand the role God has designed for each of us to play in marriage.

The Foundation of Successful Roles in Marriage:

Now that we understand what roles are and why they are important, let's lay the foundation for successfully fulfilling our roles in marriage. Ephesians chapters 5 and 6 describe the roles God has given us in marriage. However, in order to understand the instruction in these chapters, we must first understand the context in which those verses were written. This will give us the foundation that must be laid before fulfilling these roles is possible. Let's look at some important detail about the book of Ephesians.

What is the book of Ephesians? It is a letter written by the Apostle Paul while he was under house arrest in Rome for preaching about Jesus. It is divided into two parts.

Chapters 1-3 talk about the foundational truths of Christianity. Our salvation by grace and not by works. God's unending love for us. His patience and longsuffering with us. His good plan for us which was that through Jesus we would all be part of His family. These truths and more lay a foundation explaining why we can have confidence that God loves us even when we stumble, and he wants us to live a peaceful life following Him even though we are not perfect.

Chapters 4-6 talk about how-to live-in light of these truths. One of the greatest truths we glean when we put these two sections together is that when we try to live for God and fail God forgives us and still loves us. He wants us to get up and keep going. He never gives up on us or turns his back on us. This is vital to making a marriage work because we are all going to fail. God says that's ok, just don't accept the failure. Get up and keep going.

He also teaches us about roles in the body of Christ:

Eph 4:16 NLT

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

He shows us it is important for each person in the family of God to use the gift God gave them in order for the whole body to be healthy. The same is true with our part in marriage.

So, it is in these preceding chapters and verses that we find the foundation for fulfilling our roles in marriage as husband, wife, and parents. Here are the foundational truths in three simple statements:

1. Both husband and wife must be a believer and follower of Jesus Christ.

Eph 1:1 NLT

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

In the very first verse Paul tells us that he is writing this letter to people who are “God’s Holy People” meaning they are believers in Jesus Christ. Christians. He also points out that they are “faithful followers of Christ Jesus.” They desire to live the way Jesus lived and obey God’s word in their life. It is critical that both parties to marriage are believers and desire to live for God. If they are not, the marriage will most likely fail. Listen to what Paul told the people in Corinth:

2Co 6:14 NLT

Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness?

2Co 6:15 NLT

What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever?

2. Both husband and wife must desire to do what pleases God.

Eph 5:10 NLT

Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.

Living for God and doing what God wants them to do must be a priority for both husband and wife. If not, then you will constantly find yourself at odds when trying to make decisions. One will want to do what God says while the other will be more concerned about everything except pleasing God. When we please the Lord, he makes everything work out.

Pro 16:7 NLT

When people's lives please the LORD, even their enemies are at peace with them.

Mat 6:31 NLT

"So, don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'

Mat 6:32 NLT

These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.

Mat 6:33 NLT

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

3. Both husband and wife must realize living for God does not mean living perfect.

Eph 4:1 NLT

Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.

Eph 4:2 NLT

Always be humble and gentle. **Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.**

Eph 4:3 NLT

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

Notice the importance of living like a Christian which includes being patient with each other and making allowances for each other's mistakes because you love each other. Living for God is a process of growth throughout our lives not a state of existence that we ultimately reach on this earth. For that reason, we have to realize we are going to make mistakes and fail at times. The key is to get up and keep going in the right direction without giving up.

Paul also says that we should make every effort to keep the peace because that's what holds us together. I can tell you if these simple truths were followed seriously, many failed marriages would probably survive. But the key is that both husband and wife must want this and work toward this. It doesn't work without both people being on board. Remember, God says marriage is a husband and wife becoming one. That is why it is so important to marry the right person.

These three simple principles are the foundational key to having a successful marriage and fulfilling our role in the marriage relationship. Without both husband and wife being on the same page, marriage will be extremely difficult and will possibly fail.

In Conclusion:

Leadership, responsibility, and accountability are a part of how God made his creation.

So why is it that when it comes to marriage, we think that roles are unnecessary, discriminating, offensive or even evil? Is not marriage a situation involving more than one human with a goal in mind? Decisions have to be made for the good of the marriage and those involved. Actions have to be taken relative to managing finances, raising children, deciding whether to take a job offer or not, etc. Roles are just as critical to the success of a marriage as they are to the success of a team, business, or a government. Someone has to make the decision, and someone has to be held accountable for the result.

I believe the answer to the confusion about roles in marriage and why so many push back when they read the Bible account of the role of husband and wife is partially due to the distortion of those roles by the world and those who do not believe or know the Bible. In order for one to

understand what God means when he describes the roles in marriage, one must be a believer and follower of Jesus, both desiring to please God and do what the Bible says. People who are not, think the teaching of the Bible is foolish because they do not understand what God is saying and they don't want to understand.

1Co 2:14 NLT

But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. **It all sounds foolish to them, and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.**

Next time we will dive into the specifics of the God-given the role of the husband in marriage.