

# Roles In Marriage

Discovering God's Design  
For a Marriage That Works

Kevin B. Bullard



## Roles in Marriage:

# Discovering God's Design That Marriage Work

By Kevin B. Bullard

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We create Christ-centered resources & experiences that help couples build & sustain a healthy, functional marriage.

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## Chapter 1 | The Marriage Pyramid

You've heard of the Egyptian Pyramids and the food pyramid, but have you heard of the Marriage Pyramid? The marriage pyramid is a model of the relationship between God, a husband, and his wife. For your marriage to work the way God has ordained marriage to work, you and your spouse must both be continuously moving closer to God. In today's lesson we'll explore the marriage pyramid, observe the benefits associated with the pyramid, and learn the perils that await your marriage if either you or your spouse is not part of the pyramid.

As you may know the opening chapter of Genesis chronicles the creation of the heavens and earth and all that dwells therein. There is no human presence until the end of the chapter. Although Adam communed with God on a daily basis, God recognized that it was not a good thing for Adam to be alone.<sup>1</sup> At this point God put Adam in a deep sleep and formed Eve from his rib. At this point Adam and Eve became partners in their life on earth. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 speaks to the power that comes from partnership:

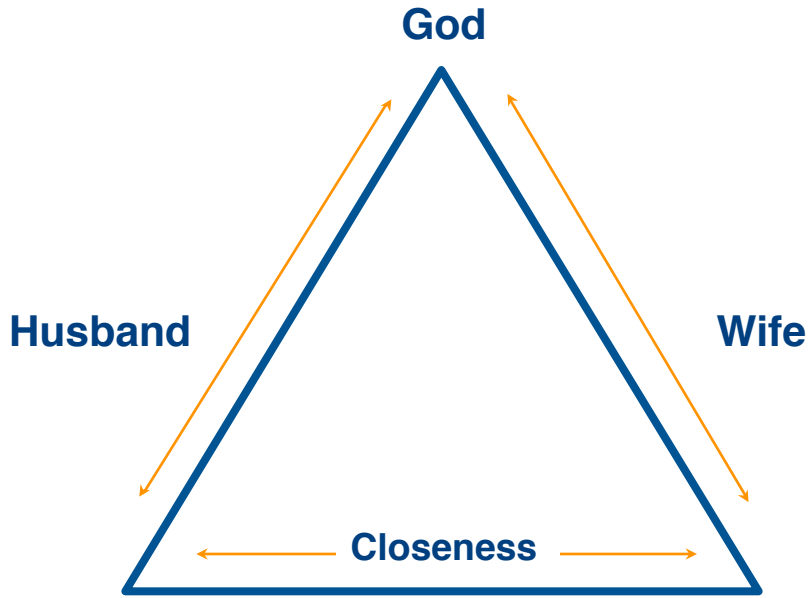
*It's better to have a partner than go it alone. Share the work, share the wealth. And if one falls down, the other helps, but if there's no one to help, tough! Two in a bed warm each other. Alone, you shiver all night. By yourself you're unprotected. With a friend you can face the worst.*

While it's good to have one other person with you, it's not good enough. The passage continues:

*Can you round up a third? A three-stranded rope isn't easily snapped.*

As this last verse implies, though two is good, three is even better. And this is where the marriage pyramid comes into play.

The marriage pyramid is the relationship between God, the husband, and his wife; and is best diagramed by the following illustration:



As the illustration depicts, God sits at the top of the pyramid, and the husband and wife each have a place on either side of the pyramid. It's key to note that there are several moving parts to the marriage pyramid. Here's a quick list of all the possible movements:

- The husband is moving closer to God.
- The husband is moving further away from God.
- The wife is moving closer to God.
- The wife is moving further away from God.
- The husband and wife are both moving closer to God and each other.
- The husband is moving closer to God and further away from his wife.
- The wife is moving closer to God and further away from her husband.
- The husband and wife are both moving further away from God and each another.

Whew! That's a lot of movement. Right?!? Let's break it down just a little bit to draw out some pertinent lessons.

## *Lessons from the Pyramid*

First of all, let me make it abundantly clear that drawing close to God DOES NOT necessarily mean praying, going to church, or even reading the Bible. While these things certainly contribute to drawing closer to God, they are all *ways* to draw closer to God. Drawing closer to God is manifested by the fruit one bears, viz., the fruit of the spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control).<sup>3</sup> The closer you get to God, the more you begin to think, talk, and act like him. That is the proof of drawing close to God, and it matches [Ephesians 5:1](#), which tells us to be imitators of God.

On the flip-side, moving further away from God does not necessarily mean falling away into a life of sin. It could simply mean not being in a place spiritually were you were a few days ago or not being as zealous as you once were or allowing things to creep in and divert your focus from God. All these things count as moving further away from God.

The marriage pyramid shows the importance of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and how it affects the relationship between the husband and the wife. As indicated by the “Closeness” gauge, when the spouses are individually moving closer or further away from God, they are simultaneously moving closer to or further away from one another. This is critically important for spouses to recognize. Both spouses must continually be in a state of *-ing* -- viz., *drawing, moving, pursuing*, etc. The *-ing* is perfect present tense, and denotes continuous action. It's not enough for one spouse to “hold the line” spiritually while the other takes a spiritual nap. That leads to trouble. While one spouse can sanctify the other,<sup>4</sup> it's best if both spouses are moving closer to God.

I cannot count the number of times I've heard spouses (usually wives) lament over the fact that they are pursuing God while their husband is pursuing everything but



God. Over and over this has created tension in the home in areas of time and finances (how much time spent at church vs. at home, and money being given to church vs. used for something else). While it can certainly be the case that the husband is the one pursuing God and the wife is off gallivanting, it's typically the husband who is asleep at the spiritual wheel.

If your marriage is going to work, this is the absolute first issue that must be addressed -- not looks, financial standing, body parts, etc. If you or your spouse is not pursuing God, it is going to be very difficult, if not impossible, for you to draw closer to one another. Simply put, you will love your spouse better when you love God first.

In the next two sections, we'll learn the benefits of both spouses drawing closer to God, and the perils awaiting the marriage when one or both spouses are not drawing closer to God.

### ***Benefits of Drawing Closer to God***

The benefits of you and your spouse drawing closer to God are numerous and include the following:

- God draws close to you.<sup>5</sup>
- The husband learns how to love his wife like Christ loved the church.<sup>6</sup>
- The wife learns how to submit<sup>7</sup> to her husband as unto the Lord.<sup>8</sup>
- The husband and wife draw closer to one another.
- Children see a good example of a Christ-centered home, and feel more secure and loved by their parents.<sup>9</sup>
- The close relationship between God, the husband, and wife - the three-stranded rope - becomes a defense against extra-marital distractions (family, friends, finances, affairs, etc.).

These are big-time benefits and should not be minimized by either spouse. Marriages that work enjoy these benefits rather than the perils experienced by marriages that do not have spouses drawing closer to God.

## *Perils of Not Drawing Closer to God*

A marriage that does not have spouses drawing closer to God is at risk of encountering major problems and facing the following perils:

- God is *not* drawing closer to you.
- The husband will find it difficult to love his wife like Christ loved the church due to a) him not drawing close to God and therefore not having a model to follow or b) his wife not drawing close to God and making it difficult for him to follow the model.
- The wife will find it difficult to submit to her husband as unto the Lord because a) she's not drawing close to God and doesn't want to submit to her husband's spiritual authority or b) her husband is not drawing close to God, yet is enforcing his authority as the head of his wife<sup>10</sup>.
- The husband and wife are not drawing closer to one another.
- Any children in the home feel confused and unsettled over the rancor and distance in the home, which can lead to insecurity and acting out.
- The relationship is porous and becomes a haven for extra-marital distractions to enter in and erode the relationship.

Obviously, these are all serious threats to a marriage. The good news is that ALL of them can be prevented when both spouses continuously and intentionally draw close to God.

The marriage pyramid is comprised of God, the husband, and the wife. There are several moving parts to this pyramid, and the best results occur when both the husband and the wife are individually and intentionally moving closer to God. When they do this, they automatically begin moving closer to one another. Just as the benefits of spouses drawing closer to God are plentiful, so are the perils that await marriages when the spouses are moving further away from God. The heartache associated with moving

away from God can be prevented, and both you and your spouse should make it your aim to intentionally move closer to God each day.

Both of you should take an *honest* look at your relationship with God to assess whether you're currently moving closer to or further away from God. Make it your aim this week to practice the activities that lead to getting closer to God, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you bear the fruit Jesus bore.

If either of you is not a Christian (one actively following Christ's teachings and commands), consider the love God showed you through sending Jesus to the Earth to die for your sins, and accept the forgiveness being extended to you as a result of Jesus' death on the cross. You can know God and have him live in your heart and direct you by the Holy Spirit. Jesus' resurrection from the dead made this possible. You can pray the following prayer to invite Jesus into your heart:

*Dear God, I accept Jesus' sacrifice for my sins, and receive your forgiveness. I acknowledge my sins and my separation from you as a result. I want you to live in my heart, direct my life, and be my Lord. I receive you.*

If you prayed this prayer, you are now a Christ-follower, and Jesus lives in you. He will work through you by his Spirit to change you into the person he wants you to be. We encourage you to let us know about your decision so we can congratulate you and offer assistance to you.

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<sup>1</sup> [Genesis 2:18](#)

## Chapter 2 | Champ or Chump?

The word “husband” comes from the Hebrew word *‘iysh*, and literally means champion. Based on that meaning alone, all husbands are champions. However, not all husbands *act* like champions. Instead, many act like chumps. How about you? Are you acting as a champ or a chump? Before answering too quickly, let’s see what each word means.

- **Champ:** 1) a person who has defeated or surpassed all rivals in a competition, 2) a person who fights or argues for a cause or on behalf of someone.
- **Chump:** a foolish person

Now, let me repeat the question: Are you acting as a champ or a chump? I certainly hope a champ. Why is it *so* important that you be a champ to your wife and not a chump? It’s simple: God has called you to lead spiritually and love her as Christ loved the church.<sup>1</sup>

Even if you grew up in a home where your father did not provide a good example of a husband or worse - your dad was missing altogether - you can learn how to be a great husband by taking heed to God’s commands for husbands, then walking them out day-by-day. While it may be true that you don’t know how to be a husband based on your upbringing, your past is certainly no reason to remain ignorant.

### *God’s Role for Husbands*

Being a husband is a two-fold role (defeat rivals & fight on wife’s behalf), and is one that Jesus served/serves for the church. Jesus defeated his main rival, Satan, then fought for our liberty by giving himself up for us.<sup>2</sup> Now he argues on our behalf as an advocate.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he makes intercession for us,<sup>4</sup> cares for us,<sup>5</sup> and feeds us.<sup>6</sup>

Like Jesus, husbands defeat rivals (other men) to get their wife, but the *real* work is just beginning. The role of the husband can be subsumed under one word: shepherd. Husbands are called to shepherd their wife and children.

## *The Family Shepherd*

Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of His church, and husbands are under-shepherds. That is, they care for individual flocks, namely their family. Shepherds were common during the days the Bible was written, and thus people instantly recognized the grave responsibility that was required. Since we are so far removed from those times, I'd like to share five responsibilities shepherds had towards their flock:

1. Watch for enemies trying to attack their sheep.
2. Defend the sheep from attackers.
3. Heal the wounded and sick sheep.
4. Find and save lost or trapped sheep.
5. Love them, share their lives, and so earn their trust.

In other words, it was the shepherds job to guide, guard, and lead to nourishment. In ways that have been modernized to fit our times and people, husbands have the identical responsibilities regarding their wife and children.

First Peter 5:1-4 provides instructions to church elders regarding their responsibility to shepherd their flock (members). However, a second look reveals that it is just as applicable to husbands as they shepherd their flock (wife and children):

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Let's explore some items in these verses:

- **Exercise oversight.** While it's not popular in today's culture, the husband has the responsibility to oversee what's happening in his family. Note: This is not the

same as being a dictator. Rather, it means the husband is to know what's going on. The husband will have to give an account for his family one day, so it's best to know now what was happening.

- **Not under compulsion, but willingly.** Husbands should not have to have their wife, family members, friends, or others twist their arm and continually kick them in the seat of the pants to show up and shepherd. The husband should shepherd willingly & eagerly because this is the good fortune and responsibility given to him by God.
- **Not domineering over those in your charge.** Perhaps one of the biggest contentions women - married and single - have against marriage is the idea of some man treating them harshly, then expecting them to submit. As a man, I can completely understand this contention. Unfortunately, men who did not understand the idea of being a family shepherd have abused their right and responsibility to lead, and have left many hurting women and children in their wake. The scripture could not be clearer: no domineering. Or as the Amplified Bible puts it, don't be arrogant, dictatorial, or overbearing.<sup>7</sup> More on this important subject can be found in our highly requested EBook, [\*Me, Submit To Him? #yeahright!\*](#)
- **Being examples to the flock.** Husbands should't simply hand out commands for living. Instead, they should embody them, and be the chief role model of godliness in their home.
- **An unfading crown of glory.** Husbands who shepherd their flock (family) well can expect to receive a reward for their diligence. If the leader of a church will receive a reward for their faithfulness, how much more a husband who is shepherding flock much more important than the church?

As the shepherd, the husband has further responsibilities to be the spiritual leader, care for and feed his wife, and join with her in partnership to advance the marriage and God's kingdom. Let's look at each of those now.

### *Spiritual Leadership*

The husband is to be the spiritual leader, i.e., the one on the frontline spiritually. Note: This has nothing to do with who's more spiritually mature, and everything to do with the husband being the husband. Cetelia and I have witnessed many situations where the wife was more spiritually mature, went to church more, had a closer relationship with God, was more expressive in prayer and worship, and was more outgoing as a Christian than her husband.

This has happened for many reasons, including the fact that many men are not finding a connection in the local church. While the wife may be the more spiritually mature spouse in the relationship, God has still called the husband to be the head of the wife and spiritual leader.<sup>8</sup>

It's worth noting that God will not give the husband a free pass on being the spiritual leader just because he didn't want to submit to another man, church was "too feminine," or his wife was a spiritual giant. The husband, following after God's divine order, is called to be the spiritual leader.

Being a spiritual leader looks like the husband leading the spiritual charge, ensuring the family is faithfully attending church, spending time in God's word, and washing his wife with God's word,<sup>9</sup> which can be done by regularly speaking scripture over her, and lifting her needs and weaknesses up before the Lord in prayer (a great resource for husbands regarding praying for their wife is *The Power of a Praying Husband*).

## *Care and Feeding*

In addition to being the spiritual leader, the husband is also called to care for and feed his wife. To care for one's wife means to provide for her needs, and to feed means to encourage her growth. At the root of a husband caring for and feeding his wife is him loving his wife as Christ loved the church,<sup>10</sup> and the husband loving his wife as he loves himself.<sup>11</sup> Obviously, for a husband to show this type of radical love to his wife, he will need to move beyond thinking about his own well-being. A husband should ask himself some key questions to ensure he's caring for and feeding his wife:

- Is my wife an equal partner in the marriage?
- Do my wife's opinions carry equal weight?
- Is my wife living as well as I am [or better]?
- Does my wife feel like she's first to me or in some other position?
- Who/What is more important to me than my wife?
- Do I nourish my wife just as I nourish my own body?
- Am I making myself relevant to my wife?

## *Joining With the Wife*

The husband is called to be his wife's partner. Society has painted a picture that the husband is the master and the wife is his slave. That ideology is not supported in scripture. What *is* supported in scripture is that the husband and his wife are partners of God's grace.<sup>12</sup>

This partnership calls for putting all other relationships [outside of God] in second place. This includes mama, daddy, siblings, friends, co-workers, etc. This is not to say that husbands cannot spend time with others. What it is saying is that a husband's first priority should be his wife, and she should come before anything and anyone other than God. Of course, there will be times when the husband has to tend to



other obligations and he may have to sacrifice some time with the wife. Generally speaking; however, the wife should be first place in his life.

As his partner, the wife should help him formulate strategy for the family, ask him questions about his leadership of the family, and respectfully push back on decisions he makes. A wise husband will recognize his wife's amazing discernment from God that can help the family be a stronger and more protected unit. Moreover, a wise husband will understand that his wife is his *best* counselor, and is a smart & capable partner who can bring a lot of good to him and family if she is released to do so.

A man, by virtue of being a husband, is a champion, and his two-fold responsibility is to fight off rivals and advocate for his wife. This advocacy looks like him being a shepherd, and therefore being the spiritual leader, caring for and feeding his wife, and joining with his wife as a partner. A husband who practices these elements will find himself carrying out the behaviors of a champion, and therefore having an alignment between who God says he is and how he acts.

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<sup>1</sup> [Ephesians 5:25](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Ephesians 5:25](#)

<sup>3</sup> [1 John 2:1](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Hebrews 7:25](#)

<sup>5</sup> [1 Peter 5:7](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Ephesians 5:29](#)

<sup>7</sup> [1 Peter 5:3](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Ephesians 5:23](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Ephesians 5:26](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Ephesians 5:25](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Ephesians 5:33](#)

<sup>12</sup> [1 Peter 3:7](#)

## Chapter 3 | Helper or Hindrance?

Dear Wife: Are you a helper or a hindrance? Before rashly answering that question, let's see what the two words mean.

- **Helper:** One who makes it easier for someone to do something by offering one's services or financial material aid.
- **Hindrance:** A thing that provides resistance, delay, or obstruction to something or someone.

Now, let me repeat the question: Are you a helper or a hindrance? I certainly hope the former. Why is it so important that you be a helper to your husband and not a hindrance? It's simple: if you aren't helping your husband, you're holding him *and* yourself back.

### *God's Primary Role for Wives*

God's primary (not only, but primary) reason for creating Eve was for her to be a wife, viz., a suitable helper to her husband.<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 5:22 corresponds with this thought by telling wives to "understand and support" their husbands. The word used for "help" in Genesis 2:18 is kin to our English word *succor*, which means to give assistance to or aid. This is similar to what Jesus does for the church.<sup>2</sup>

This is a great place to note that women are not called to a life of slavery nor low achievement. Women are just as free as men to achieve and rise to any level they possibly can, and as we see in our society, are outpacing men's achievements in a number of areas and industries. When a woman decides to get married, she retains her drive, dreams and rights. However, her drive, dreams, and rights should fall in line behind her new primary responsibility, which is to help her husband. "Help her husband do what?" you may ask. Whatever it is he needs help with that is honoring to God's law, civil law, and his wife's personal law. Again, this is not removing the wife's drive, dreams, and rights; it's just reordering them. The help the wife provides her

husband is to be tailor-made for him, which obviously requires that the wife know her husband.

### ***Know Your Husband***

Author Debbie Pearl notes that God is multi-faceted, and since we are made in his image, men, too, are multi-faceted. She describes three type of husbands:

1. Mr. Command
2. Mr. Visionary
3. Mr. Steady

#### ***Mr. Command***

According to Pearl, Mr. Command is a bold, dominant leader who appears to be callous on the outside, yet has a sensitive core. Mr. Command is known for expecting his wife to wait on him hand and foot. He may not always be as sensitive to his wife's needs as Mr. Visionary or Mr. Steady, and at times may seem to shut her out. Due to his strong character, he is often unyielding and may veil his needs from his wife. Moreover, his aggressiveness may come out in his words and tone and cause damage to his wife, who often is his opposite -- quiet, gentle, moderately-paced. Pearl suggests that wives married to a Mr. Command show him honor and reverence on a a daily basis. This commanding man can become softer around the edges, and this wife can help him by not shaming him, belittling him, or ignoring his accomplishments.

#### ***Mr. Visionary***

While Mr. Command is destined to lead a charge, Mr. Visionary is busy thinking up ways to make the charge more efficient. Mr. Visionary is a seer and dreamer; one who is always trying to make and do things better. According to Pearl, Mr. Visionary loves confrontation, and hates the status quo. Mr. Visionary is driven by an appetite to communicate with his voice, writing, music, art, or actions.

Due to always wanting to make things better, Mr. Visionary can become divisive and cause problems. Therefore, Pearl notes, every Mr. Visionary needs a prudent and

stable wife who has a positive view of life. Over time Mr. Visionary will become more practical, and less of a risk-taker. Until that point, wives married to a Mr. Visionary would be wise to be loyal and flexible.

### ***Mr. Steady***

While Mr. Command is leading and Mr. Visionary is dreaming, Mr. Steady is being, well, steady. Mr. Steady avoids controversy, takes his time to speak and make decisions, and is pretty laid back. If your husband is a Mr. Steady, these traits can be seen as a positive.

While he will not be demanding, pushy, nor secretive in his methods or decisions; his cautious and slowly-but-surely nature may drive you up the wall if you are a fast-paced, aggressive wife with a hint of bossiness. If you are married to Mr. Steady, you would be wise to learn to be grateful for him the way he is, and honor him as your husband. What you may perceive to be “weakness” is actually meekness. Moreover, what you see as “hesitation” is really cautious wisdom. Mr. Steady needs a wife who will walk beside him as she grows in her own right.

I’m hopeful the descriptions above gave you further insight into what you’ve probably already realized through experience. Again, wives are instructed to “understand and support” their husbands. Obviously, this can only be done when the wife knows her husband. Knowledge is good, but as German writer Johann von Goethe declared, “Knowing is not enough, we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do.” In light of that wisdom, it’s necessary that you take the knowledge of your husband and begin to adapt to him so you can be his helper.

### ***Adapt To Your Husband***

It is nearly impossible to write about a wife adapting to her husband without at least a couple of wives quickly retorting, “My husband should adapt to me, too! Why do I always have to bend for him? I have feelings ... I want to be heard ... everything you Marriage Works! folks talk about it always geared towards the wife doing this and

that. What about the husbands? Why do you all always let the men off scot-free? Why aren't your messages balanced or equal"

Notice: balanced does not mean equal. See the difference between the words? Balanced means having the correct or necessary proportion or supply to create a whole. Equal, on the other hand, means having the same portion or supply to create the whole. **BIG DIFFERENCE!**

Marriage is not about the husband and wife giving equal portions. The nature of *any* relationship is an ebb and flow. Throughout the life of the relationship there will always be one spouse giving more than another. For a season the husband may give more than the wife, and during another season the wife may give more than the husband. That said, it should not always be the same spouse giving more. That's unhealthy & dysfunctional, and will make a marriage stop working.

The Bible makes it very clear that the husband and wife are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the wife is called individually to submit to her husband as unto the Lord.<sup>4</sup> Part of the wife's submission to her husband includes adapting to him. The Bible actually gives this command in three different places:

Wives, be subject to your husbands [subordinate and **adapt** yourselves to them], as is right and fitting and your proper duty in the Lord. (Colossians 3:18, AMP)

[The older women] are to give good counsel and be teachers of what is right and noble, so that they will wisely train the young women to be sane and sober of mind (temperate, disciplined) and to love their husbands and their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, homemakers, good-natured (kindhearted), **adapting** and subordinating themselves to their husbands,

that the word of God may not be exposed to reproach (blasphemed or discredited). (Titus 2:3-5, AMP)

In like manner, you married women, be submissive to your own husbands [subordinate yourselves as being secondary to and dependent on them, and **adapt yourselves to them**], so that even if any do not obey the Word [of God], they may be won over not by discussion but by the [godly] lives of their wives. (1 Peter 3:1, AMP)

As these verses clearly indicate, the wife is to adapt to her husband. Adapt means to make something suitable for a new use or purpose. This, in my estimation, rightly defines the original purpose God gave to Eve in Genesis 2:18, “Now the Lord God said, It is not good (sufficient, satisfactory) that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper meet (suitable, adapted, complementary) for him.”

These verses about adapting to the husband underscore the idea that wife is her husband’s suitable helper, which shows an even greater level of specialization. As mentioned earlier, this does not mean the wife’s drive, dreams, and rights are squashed. Instead they are re-prioritized after her first responsibility as a wife, which is to be her husband’s helper. A husband who loves his wife and cares for her will do all he can to encourage her gifts and skills to ensure she is achieving as many of her dreams as possible. This is the picture of a God-honoring marriage between a husband and wife.

### ***Submit To Your Husband***

In the scriptures used above, you likely noticed the words submissive and subordinate. For a lot of wives, this where indignation arises, and they say, “I am not letting *any* man - especially my husband - make me submit to him.” Given the way submission has been taught and demonstrated in our society over many years, and co-mingled with sexism towards women, I get it. I can understand why submission has

such negative connotations. Still, we must deal with the word and subject if we're going to build a marriage that works God's way. While submission is for both spouses, in this section, we'll just look at the part pertaining to wives since it is often viewed as the most offensive.

Jesus, who is our ultimate example of living life in relationship with God, knew what submission was all about. Just before being crucified, Jesus prayed for God to excuse him from the burden of having to die for the world's sins. Yet, without missing a beat he declared, "Not my will, but your will be done." This act of submission was the key to the chasm between God and man being bridged, and mankind being able to fellowship with God on earth and in heaven for eternity. Jesus' submission was not pleasant, right, nor in his immediate best interest. Yet, he knew that submission was the key to getting God's best for himself and those he loved (you and me).

In Jesus's example of submission to the Heavenly Father, we can derive eight characteristics that should define submission:

<b>Submission</b>	<b>Slavery</b>
Honoring	Dishonoring
Loving	Hateful
Offered	Taken
Faith-filled	Fear-filled
Selfless	Selfish
Authentic	Feigned
Win-Win	Win-Lose

### *Honoring*

Here's an example from the political world: Congressional members in a party different from the President may not like the policies being pushed from the White House. Yet, their honor, viz., and respect, for the office of the President should cause them to treat the President with the dignity due the office. Simply put, honor is an *attitude* that something or someone is valuable.

### *Loving*

The second characteristic of submission is love. Get this: people can submit to others to the degree that their hearts are filled with God's love. We have the same love in us that God had for Jesus when he walked on the earth,<sup>5</sup> and that love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup> That said, it is possible for you to love your spouse enough to submit to him/her. It is a decision you must make.

### *Offered*

The third characteristic of submission is that it is offered voluntarily, viz., it is given as a service based on one's will. Submission is given to a spouse because of honor and a heart filled with love, spouses who submit, yield to, or accept the direction of their mate.

### *Faith-filled*

The fourth characteristic of submission is faith. Faith in what? Foremost, faith in God that your submission is pleasing to Him and will reap benefits for you and your marriage. Secondly, submission requires faith in your spouse's intention not to take advantage of you.

### *Selfless*

The fifth characteristic of submission is selflessness. Before you will to submit to your spouse, you're going to have to humble yourself and get over your right to be right. As the saying goes you must consider the rights of others before your own feelings, and the feelings of others before your own rights.



### *Authentic*

The sixth characteristic of submission is authenticity. Simply put, submission must be real, unfeigned, and without hypocrisy. A husband on one of our webinars expressed concern that his wife would “submit” to him, but not really mean it. Cetelia’s and my response was that if it’s not being offered authentically, there’s no reward for his wife’s submission.

### *Win-Win*

The seventh characteristic of submission is easy to grasp: everybody wins. When a spouse submits to the other in a spirit of faith, honor, love and service; there is mutual benefit. True submission is symbiotic, meaning there's a mutually beneficial relationship between both parties. Both people win -- even if it doesn't seem at the beginning that both people are going to win (this is where the element of faith really comes into play!). Submission is a win-win relationship whereas slavery is a win-lose relationship.

I realize this was a brief introduction to submission. We talk a bit more about mutual submission in Chapter 4. For greater detail, please see [\*Me, Submit To Him?\*](#) [\*#yeahright!\*](#)

### *Cetelia’s Dreams*

To demonstrate what submission looks like in our marriage, I’d like to tell you about Cetelia. Two of her long-held dreams were to be a teacher and a stay-at-home mom (*far* different from the dreams *I had for her*). When her dream of being a teacher dream didn’t work out, she focused her desire on being a homemaker. All the while, I wanted her to go to work -- like my mom did -- and use her IT degree to make the big bucks. After a lot of talking, praying, and consideration; I finally recognized God’s plan for us, and agreed that Cetelia should come home. She’s finally accomplishing both of her dreams in a way that only God could orchestrate.

Even though she is a homeschooling mother, Cetelia has described her role in life, for now, to support me and raise godly children. After the children are grown-up

and leave home, her role will be to support me and \_\_\_\_\_ (we'll see what comes next). Either way, she understands that her first priority as a wife is to support me, her husband. It's not something I've ever demanded nor mentioned. Instead it's something she has learned from the Bible and put into practice on her own. And wow, what a difference it has made in our home. In light of Cetelia's role, what's my role? Since July 15, 2000, it has been my job to shepherd, support, nourish, and encourage her ambitions.

### *Life After, "I Do!"*

Women who choose to get married, yet try to maintain their pre-marriage trajectory in life without consideration for their new role as wife will find marriage to be frustrating and difficult. Furthermore, they'll make it difficult for their husband who is looking for his wife to be his helper.

God has arranged marriage so that when the wife adapts to her husband and seeks to be his helper, both individuals are catapulted forward. At the same time, sacrifice is required from both. Each spouse involved will have to give something up for the good & health of the whole. The wonderful thing is this: although the spouses have given things up, they will always get something far greater in return than what they sacrificed. This is how marriage is supposed to work, and both Cetelia and I have found this to be true.

To review, the wife's primary - not only - role in marriage is to be her husband's helper. When she abandons this role to pursue other priorities, she automatically becomes a hindrance to him. Eve's primary responsibility was to be a suitable helper to her husband. This blueprint still holds true for today's marriages. Unfortunately, it is often violated by women who become wives and don't know or are unwilling to step into the wife's biblical role.

Each man falls into the category of Mr. Command, Mr. Visionary, or Mr. Steady; and has certain strengths and weaknesses as a result. Wives who understand their

husband are able to leverage his strengths while compensating for his weaknesses through her strengths. This is done by adapting and submitting to her husband, which wives are instructed to do in multiple places in the Bible. A wife who serves as her husband's helper is not called to give up her drive, dreams, nor rights. Rather she's called to re-prioritize them according to the new role she has decided to accept: wife. A husband who shepherds and loves his wife will do all he can to encourage her gifts and skills to ensure she is able to achieve as many of her dreams as possible. This is the picture of a God-honoring marriage between a a Champ & Helper.

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<sup>1</sup> [Genesis 2:18](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Hebrews 2:18](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Ephesians 5:21](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Ephesians 5:22-24](#)

<sup>5</sup> [John 17:26](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Romans 5:5](#)

## Chapter 4 | Partner or Parasite?

So far we've talked about how both spouses must draw close to God, and the role of the husband wife. Now, let's put it all together and talk about partnership.

- **Partner:** 1) an associate in an activity or endeavor or sphere of common interest, 2) A person who is a member of a relationship.
- **Parasite:** An organism in a relationship that takes nourishment and life from a host without giving anything of value in return -- often for a prolonged period of time.

### *God's Intention for Marriage*

God's intention for marriage is for there to be a partnership between the husband and the wife. Author Lisa Bevere was on-point when she said, "Marriage is not a power struggle--it is a power union!"<sup>1</sup> This is substantiated in [Genesis 2:24](#) and [Ephesians 5:31](#), which speak of the husband and wife cleaving, viz., joining, uniting, holding fast, becoming like one.

God did not intend for either the husband or wife to dominate one another nor for either to passively let the other do whatever he or she pleases. God's intention for marriage was, remains, and will always be partnership. Therefore, the husband and wife must ensure they are working for and with one another rather than against each other.

### *The Keys to Forming a Partnership*

There are three keys to forming a partnership with your mate. They include:

1. Agreeing on the direction you're both headed.<sup>2</sup>
2. Mutual submission to one another.<sup>3</sup>
3. Defining roles that work for your marriage -- not society's stereotypes.

## *Agreement*

Agreeing on a direction is critical to walking together as partners in marriage. Just as the two of you cannot arrive at the same destination physically when walking in two different directions, neither can you do it in marriage. Husband and wives who start off madly in love without first plotting a course will find themselves disillusioned and out of love once the routine of marriage sets in.

Have a vision. Have a plan. Have some goals. Don't get married just "trusting God that everything is going to work out" without you needing to do anything at all. Instead, spend time talking about *everything* and *anything* you can think of that will affect your marriage. Nothing is off limits: family, friends, finances (spending, saving, investing, loaning, borrowing) , sex (birth control, children, use of toys), faith, in-laws, contact with old flames, dietary restrictions, home & car purchases, restrictions using social media, etc.

There were a zillion different things you and your spouse should have talked about and agreed on BEFORE getting married -- even if you agreed to disagree. But, if you didn't, it's never too late to start. The key thing is to talk about it and agree on the direction you're headed so the the two of you get there together . We recommend [1000 Questions for Couples](#) to prime the question pump.

## *Mutual Submission*

As noted alluded to earlier, submission is a dirty word in marriage, and a lot of women - whether married or not - look at the word with great contempt and derision. Based on the definition of submission many women have heard and seen modeled, I cannot say that I blame them. Let me say this clearly: there is absolutely nothing godly about a woman being treated like a slave, slapped around, yelled at, confined against her will, and subjected to harsh words and treatment "for Christ's sake." **That's not submission ... that's slavery.**

[Ephesians 5:21](#) indicates the husband and wife are to practice mutual submission out of reverence for Christ. This looks like both spouses deferring to the other as the situation requires. While the wife is further told to submit to her husband as unto the Lord, this mutual submission is about each spouse showing deference and honor to one another. Neither spouse is always right, and neither spouse should always get their way. This verse indicates the give and take in the marriage relationship.

In conclusion, I will go to my grave believing that God had good intentions when he created marriage and commanded submission. God's idea of submission works when both the husband and wife are yielding to the other,<sup>4</sup> the wife is submitting to her husband (allowing him to be the spiritual head as God ordained),<sup>5</sup> and the husband is loving his wife like he loves his own body and like Christ loved the church.<sup>6</sup> If any of these pieces is out of whack, submission turns into craziness and drama that is best suited for an episode of *Jerry Springer*.

One of the results of the unbalanced and unscriptural practices of submission is abuse. Abuse is self-defined, and any spouse who believes he/she is being abused in any way should get to safety immediately, and contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline » [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org). Safety Alert: Computer use can be monitored and is impossible to completely clear. If you are afraid your internet usage might be monitored, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224.

### ***Defining Roles***

I grew up in a home where my mom did all the “woman” things, and my dad did all the “man” things. As I came into marriage, I assumed what I saw was the correct and *only* way of doing things. Boy was I wrong!

After a few years of managing the budget in my house, I became wise and suggested to Cetelia that she start managing the finances. Why? Because she was better

at it than I was. As soon as I turned the duty over to her, it's amazing how much more aware we were of the state of our finances. It's not that I was purposefully negligent ... it's just that she was better (I later learned that turning the budget over to her did *not* mean I did not have anything to do with the money except for making it). Though she still manages the budget and pays the bills, we talk about the budget each month, and I am aware of what goes on. It's like I'm the CEO and she's the CFO.

To make your marriage work, you have got to outline each other's roles. These roles should be defined in two ways: 1) biblically and 2) according to skill. There are certain roles the Bible has already outlined, and most of them have to do with spiritual responsibility (the husband is the head of the wife,<sup>7</sup> the wife is the helper,<sup>8</sup> etc.). The others should be delegated according to who can do what the best. Furthermore, upon defining and delegating roles, each spouse should assist the other in fulfilling his/her role. In other words, provide whatever type of support is needed to ensure your partner can fulfill his/her role in an efficient way.

My friend Ryan is a great cook and enjoys doing it, so he does all the cooking in his house. If I tried to copy Ryan, my family would have died long ago from starvation or food poisoning. I bring this up to stress a critical point: it's important to remember that playing a role in your marriage is not about fitting in with society's stereotypes or being like someone else. It's about forming a relationship that will make your marriage work. It's about helping. It's about supporting. It's about partnership.

Both you and your spouse will have multiple opportunities to be parasites in the marriage. Refuse to do so. Instead, be partners by agreeing on the direction you're heading together, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, and defining roles according to the Bible and each of your skills. Doing this will help you have a working marriage where you're both contributing and supporting one another. You'll both find this to be personally rewarding and enriching to your marriage. Be partners!

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa Bevere, [<http://twitter.com/#!/LisaBevere/status/29397455499>], November 2010

<sup>2</sup> [Amos 3:3](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Ephesians 5:21](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Ephesians 5:21](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Ephesians 5:22-24](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Ephesians 5:25-29](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Ephesians 5:24](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Genesis 2:18](#)



## Chapter 5 | Putting It All Together

In this EBook we've talked about the the marriage pyramid, a champion, a helper, and a partner. Let's review.

The marriage pyramid shows the importance of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and how it affects the relationship between the husband and the wife. As indicated by the "Closeness" gauge, when the spouses are individually moving closer or further away from God, they are simultaneously moving closer to or further away from one another. This is critically important for spouses to recognize. Both spouses must continually be in a state of *-ing* -- viz., *drawing, moving, pursuing*, etc. The *-ing* is perfect present tense, and denotes continuous action. It's not enough for one spouse to "hold the line" spiritually while the other takes a spiritual nap. That leads to trouble. While one spouse can sanctify the other, it's best if both spouses are moving closer to God.

A man, by virtue of being a husband, is a champion, and his two-fold responsibility is to fight off rivals and advocate for his wife. This advocacy looks like him being a shepherd, and therefore being the spiritual leader, caring for and feeding his wife, and joining with his wife as a partner. A husband who practices these elements will find himself carrying out the behaviors of a champion, and therefore having an alignment between who God says he is and how he acts.

A wife's primary - not only - role in marriage is to be her husband's helper. When she abandons this role to pursue other priorities, she automatically becomes a hindrance to him. Eve's primary responsibility was to be a suitable helper to her husband. This blueprint still holds true for today's marriages.

A husband who shepherds and loves his wife will do all he can to encourage her gifts and skills to ensure she is able to achieve as many of her dreams as possible. This is the picture of a God-honoring marriage between a a Champ & Helper.

Finally, a husband and wife who act as partners instead of parasites will build one another up, and make their marriage to advance. Make it a goal of yours to understand, and then walk in these roles prescribed by God for a marriage that works. You'll find His grace and help all along the way as you do. And, while it will not always be smooth sailing, the character developed, and the love cultivated throughout the process will enrich your marriage greatly!



## About Marriage Works!

Kevin & Cetelia Bullard are the duo behind Marriage Works!, Inc., a ministry that creates resources and experiences that help couples build & sustain a healthy, functional marriage. They have been married since 2000, and are parents to three great children; Max, Caitlin, and Kuria Joy. Kevin & Cetelia both come from divorced homes, so they understand the pain and confusion caused by broken marriages. As a result, they are committed to making their marriage work, and helping other couples learn how to make theirs work as well. Through Marriage Works! they provide coaching, weekend Getaways, and resources that lead to a healthy, functional marriage. You can access Marriage Works! at [marriageworks.us](http://marriageworks.us), [facebook.com/MarriageWorks](https://facebook.com/MarriageWorks), and [twitter.com/mrgwrks](https://twitter.com/mrgwrks).

