

## The Revolving Face of Marriage

In our world many misunderstand the nature of headship and leadership within marriage. Because of this misunderstanding, many marriages falter and cease to be what God intends. It is not God's intent for a man to lead his home in any other way than the way Jesus leads us. God's statement that the man would dominate the woman was simply a prediction of sin's effect. The Fall made man the ruler of woman, but Paul's instruction in Ephesians 5 makes the husband a servant to his wife in a more striking manner than it makes the wife a servant to her husband. The result is a relationship of mutual submission, pure and simple, where neither one is above the other.

So, with this in mind, how does a man lead his family spiritually? The answer is in the same way a woman does: by the loving support of submission. Man's role mirrors the way Jesus has submitted Himself to us, taking the initiative in sacrificial deference in the relationship. In his marriage, and in the community of believers, he is to crucify himself, taking the first step in what will become mutual submission. As Stu Weber says in *Tender Warrior*, men are to lead on the "soft shades of the tender side—providing, protecting, teaching, caring, guiding, loving, developing, freeing, sacrificing, leading—rather than in the harsh tones of the warrior side—ruling, presiding, directing, determining, bossing, deciding."

However, even though the source of love's flow is ordained to be through the husband, this doesn't mean that the wife's corresponding role as servant, life-giver isn't just as important and powerful. Many times the roles are switched, and the woman becomes the primary initiating source of sacrificial love in a relationship where the husband, for whatever reason, cannot act. Regardless, the woman's role is just as critical and equal as the man's.

As John Eldredge notes in *The Journey of Desire*, the man's curse isn't really about thorns and thistles (not all men work in the ground). No, it is about futility and failure. Every man experiences that on some level. By the same token, the woman's curse isn't just limited to babies and marriage (not all women are called to marriage or to bear children.) Every woman is cursed with loneliness (relational heartache), with the urge to control (especially her man), and of course with the dominance of men (a tragic fact of the Fall).

Therefore, when a man mimics God's sacrificial submission and submits to a woman, it results in a direct ministry to the woman's wound, soothing and healing her relational heartache and softening her controlling tendencies. On the other hand, God's call for a woman's submissive support of her husband is just what the man needs to help heal his problem with futility and failure. In this way a relationship of mutual submission helps to repair the wounds dealt to both sexes by the Fall.

Only Christ's submission to us has the power to win us and heal us. It is the same with a husband or a wife. Only his and her mutual submission to the other has the power to win and mend each other's heart. This is the only way a spouse can lead his or her family spiritually. Even so, a man cannot fix a woman, nor can a woman fix a man. Each can only lead his/her spouse to God by his/her Christ-like submission.

Headship and leadership take both a masculine *and* a feminine face. This complimentary and perfectly integrated face revolves in the circle of love, taking turns at providing, protecting, mentoring, and loving. Husbands and wives are unique counterparts, face-to-face equals in this God-like dance of love.