



# GOD'S DESIGN FOR MEN IN CHRIST

---

## Introduction

Many people are confused over the proper roles of men and women in the church. With the feminist movement gaining momentum and pressing into evangelical thought, many churches have focused attention on the issues surrounding women's roles in the church. However, one should ask how churches could be persuaded by feminist ideals in the first place? Is it an agreement with their doctrines or is it a reaction to another issue which makes feminism attractive? It has been said that if men were fulfilling their Biblical roles, there would be no fuel for the feminist momentum. Perhaps it is time that we take an honest look at the role of men, as described in the Bible, to see if our contemporary models truly match God's eternal standard.

*What is the Biblical role for a man? **God's Design for Men in Christ** will answer that question from the Biblical point of view. At Grace Church, we believe that it is the responsibility of every man to examine his leadership style, and humbly determine whether it models that of Jesus Christ, or that of the world.*

## What God Established at Creation

In order to understand the role of men in Christ today, we must first understand the role which man was created by God to fulfill. To do so, we must turn to the pages of Genesis to find God's master design for all relationships.

### Harmonious Relationship

In Genesis 1:26-28, we find the first description of God's creation of man. These verses are an overview of creation, and give us the purpose which God intends for both man and woman.

In these verses, we find that ***God made both man and woman unique among all of creation, to live in a harmonious relationship, working together to accomplish His will.***

First, these verses show us that man is **unique** among all of God's creation. The announcement of Genesis 1:26 brings the creation account to its pinnacle. God says, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule... over all the earth." While all of creation reflects the glory of God, mankind alone is **made in His image**. Man was made to mirror a personal reflection of the character of God.

Man, as described in Genesis 1:26-28, speaks of both male and female. Both man and woman were made in the image of God. As such, they participate equally in reflecting His glory; revealing His image.

Second, man and woman are to **work together** to accomplish God's will. Verses 26 and 28 both say that they are equally blessed and given the charge to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it." They are both told to rule over the rest of God's creation. This rule over creation is not to be a male dominated autocracy, but a

unified co-regency between the man and woman. Both are given the task of doing God's will.

In order for Adam and Eve to fulfill God's command, cooperation was necessary. They must live in a **harmonious relationship**.

This is a fundamental point in understanding God's design. Males are not superior to females in God's creation. In the pursuit of reflecting God's glory and doing God's work, men do not have an edge over women. Rather, *men must work together with women in Harmonious Relationships to accomplish God's will, not their independent goals.*

### **Headship Responsibility**

While God created men and women to bear His image equally, He also made them distinct from each other. God created the first human relationship with an order and design which also bears His image, and is seen in the function of each person in the relationship. Adam is given the role of *Headship Responsibility*, while Eve is given the role of *Submissive Accountability*.

Genesis 1 gave us the overview of creation, but Genesis 2 is more specific, revealing the order of creation and the function, or role, for which man and woman were each created. Adam was created first, then Eve (Genesis 2:7-18). Adam alone is given the charge to name all the animals prior to Eve's existence (2:19-20). And when Eve is later created from his side, God's design is perceived by Adam when he awakes and responds by naming her Issah ("out of man" - 2:22-23).

Most scholars agree that the priority of Adam's creation, as well as the function he performs, are demonstrations of God's design for his *Headship*. In addition, the human race bears the God-given name **man** (1:26). That name is no accident, rather it reflects God's careful purpose and design of God in establishing the headship of Adam from whom every other human has descended (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). While in position God created men and women as equals, He has given man the role of headship.

Man's headship can also be seen in the responsibility he has for sin. After Adam and Eve both sinned, God addresses Adam and asks "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:8-9). God is omniscient, so He knows both what had happened and where Adam was. The question is one of accountability, *and it is addressed to Adam alone*. This is further emphasized in God's rebuke to Adam:

Then *to Adam* He said, "Because *you* have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded *you*, saying 'You shall not eat from it',

Cursed is the ground *because of you...*" (emphasis added).

God clearly holds Adam responsible for sin, and the consequence is a curse to all of creation (v17, cf. Romans. 5:12; 8:18-22), over which God had given him *Headship Responsibility*.

The Biblical roles of headship and submission have nothing to do with position before God. Remember that Genesis 1 clearly states that both man and woman were made in God's image (1:26,27). Positionally, both are equal before God. The roles of headship and submission, rather, have to do with God's order and design of creation, which also bears His image.

*God Himself displays to us that in order for equals to live in harmony with each other, there must be functional authority and submission.*

While the Son is equal to the Father in every possible way positionally (John 1:14; 10:30), He is always seen in the role of submission, never doing anything on His own initiative (John 5:30; 8:28, 42; 10:18; 12:49; 14:10), but always being subject to the Father's will (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). Why? Paul gives us insight in 1 Corinthians 15:27, where he says that in the end, when all things are fully subjected to the Son, then the Son Himself will also be subject to the One who subjected all things to Him, **that God may be all in all!** The perfect harmony of the Trinity is dependent on the roles of authority and submission, and this continues into eternity!

So we see that in God's master design, man and woman are created for a **Harmonious Relationship**, coming together to do God's will. At the same time, the man is created for **Headship Responsibility**, to lead the relationship in the direction which glorifies God at all times.

### **What Sin Brought at the Fall**

Genesis 3 records the first sin by man. Not only did this sin bring separation from God, it also had a destructive effect on the harmonious relationship God designed for man and woman.

We are not told how Adam and Eve related to each other prior to the fall, but we do know that without sin the outworking of harmony, for which they had been created, was perfect. Since they were created to do God's will, neither sought an individual agenda. Since Adam was created to display headship in the image of God, his leadership was loving and sacrificial (John 3:35; 5:20; 10:17). And since Eve was created to be Adam's corresponding helper, there was perfect union. Evidently, Adam and Eve functioned in perfect harmony, **in the image of God, until they sinned.**

Adam's sin brought grave consequences. First he is told that he will die (Genesis 3:19). God reminds Adam that this consequence is exactly what he had been told (3:17, cf. 2:17). In other words, because Adam *violated God's direct command*, he died. But not only him, Eve died too, just as every living man and woman since. Why? Because as Adam was given headship responsibility, when he sinned the consequences of that sin fell on every person who would come from him.

Adam's sin brought another set of consequences. God reminded him that he had "listened to the voice of (his) wife..." (3:17). In doing so, Adam *abandoned the headship* for which he was created. When he did this, he sinned, and his *harmonious relationship* with Eve was forfeited.

The consequence of this sin had already been described to Eve (3:16), so there was no need to repeat it to Adam. What God does show Adam is his responsibility for it (3:17). Adam abandoned his headship. Because of that, man and woman could no longer function perfectly in the image of God. When God told Eve that her desire would be for her husband (3:16), He showed her how she also had stepped outside of her created role. This desire would be to control him (cf. 4:7), not a loving desire to be with him. The consequence of her sin would be a continual desire to function outside of her role of submission. Adam's response to her would be no less sinful. When God said "...And he shall rule over you" (3:16), He is pointing to Adam's neglect of godly leadership. This is not the same harmonious rule that God commanded (1:28), but an ungodly, dominating

control over her life! We have seen the horrible fulfillment of male domination over women throughout history. And it has affected every other relationship man has known.

Sin brought a total destruction the harmonious relationship God designed for men and women. Men no longer exercise loving leadership, harmoniously directing the relationship in the path of God's will. Rather, they attempt to lord and dominate towards their own selfish desires. And women do not seek to be submissive helpers, but rather subversive controllers. Neither have God's will in mind; only self interest and self satisfaction. It is a problem only the grace of God can help us overcome.

## What Christ Restores in Salvation

Because of sin, man lost the ability to lead a harmonious relationship. In Christ, however, every man has the ability to see his relationships restored to the created design of God.

First, Christ becomes the *model* for his headship. For example, in Ephesians 5:23, men are called to look at Christ as the model for headship in their marriage relationships. Paul says as Christ loved the church (over whom He is head - 5:23), love your wife. Give her your full sacrificial love. This will be discussed further in the next section, but it is imperative that men look to Christ as their leadership model.

Second, the Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer (Romans 8:9) provides the *power* for restored headship. No believer can have restored relationships, as Paul discusses in Ephesians 5:22-6:9, unless he is continually being filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit (5:18). This will produce the humble attitude of being submissive to each other in the fear of Christ (5:21), as Paul shows, is the key to establishing God honoring, harmonious relationships.

### Godly Headship in the Home

While not every man aspires to be a leader in the church or in business, *every man is called by God to exercise Headship Responsibility in his home*. And, while every man is different in personality and skill, the Bible has one standard which any believer can follow. In Ephesians 5:25-26a, Paul sets that standard when says "love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her..."

The restoration of *Headship Responsibility* begins as men faithfully model the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ in their marriages. First, husbands are to **give themselves up** for their wives. A husband's personal goals, hobbies, likes and dislikes are to be laid down in order to serve his wife. Husbands are not to use the bonds of marriage to suit their own ends or get their own way. That is not Biblical leadership, it's bullying coercion.

Biblical leadership never gives a man the *right* to get his own way, rather it gives him the *responsibility* to see that God's will is done in every relationship he leads. That is why Paul continues by showing the goal of this love, always looking for ways that he might sanctify his wife (5:26) or set her apart for God.

Peter agrees that domination produces an ungodly marriage. In 1 Peter 3:7 he says that men are to "live with your wives in an understanding way." A believing husband is to be a straight-A student of his wife. Here is sacrificial love. Striving to understand rather than be understood always takes personal sacrifice. And, Peter adds, understand her "as with a weaker vessel." While some think that Peter is pointing out her deficiencies, it is better

to understand that he is exalting her worth. Weaker vessels were often the most expensive, such as china plates are today. Peter is saying live sacrificially with her, without sacrificing your opinion of her.

Peter goes on to say that husbands are to “grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life so that your prayers be not hindered.” In other words, husbands are not to be prideful, but are to live in humility before their wives. Granting her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life is the same as saying “See her as your equal before God!” A husband who refuses to do this not only hinders his relationship with his wife, but with God as well. How? Peter says his prayers will be hindered. This is probably due to the pride in his life, which makes him think he is above his wife! (cf. 1 Peter 5:5).

The husband's primary responsibility in restoring headship responsibility is to become a servant like Christ. He must give himself up for the best of his wife, always looking to see God's will accomplished in her life, rather than his own wishes met. *In contrast to what many men may think, sacrificial service does not destroy the headship role of a husband, rather it is the only way to restore headship the way God intended it.*

Men not only dominate their wives at home, but their children as well. In Paul's day, a father could abuse his children without penalty, even sell them into slavery if he so desired. So Paul tells fathers to have the same humble leadership towards their children, by not provoking them to wrath (Ephesians 6:4). Fathers are to put away personal rights for the benefit of their children. They are to be leaders, seeing God's will done in their family, as they, “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Perhaps the restoration of headship responsibility is most desperately needed in the home. Sociological studies continue to link the destruction of our society to the deterioration of the home. And as home life decays, so does the next generation of leadership in the church, for church leaders must first be godly leaders in their homes (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

### **Godly Headship in the Church**

Men who are called to lead the Church are also called to be model servants. In John 13:16, Jesus reminded the future apostles of the Church that they are not greater than Him... right after giving them a vivid object lesson of sacrificial love (13:1-15).

The most picturesque description of church leadership is found in a word which is used primarily to describe their activity: *shepherd*. The New Testament takes this analogy from a common occupation of first century life in Palestine. Everyone knew the life of a shepherd: the long, hard hours; the life threatening situations; and the care and protection of animals which never seemed to learn. But a good shepherd was willing to make great sacrifices for his sheep (John 10).

Paul called the elders of Ephesus to be model shepherds (Acts 20:28). Peter reminded shepherds to do their work “voluntarily, ...with eagerness; ...proving to be examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-3). In other words, leaders in the church are to be the best examples of sacrificial service. Peter also exhorted the younger men to be clothed with the same attitudes and actions of humility (1 Peter 5:5).

Men who are natural leaders in the marketplace do not always make good leaders in the church. Their goals are often different, as are their methods. Jesus said they lord their authority over people (Matthew 20:27). As was demonstrated in Genesis 3:16, lording or domination is a result of sin, not a measure of success. Christlike headship in the church

is not seen in the man who can persuade the most people to follow his opinions, but the one who demonstrates how to serve others to the extent that Jesus came "... to serve, and to give His life..." (Matthew 20:25-28). It shall not be so among you... the greatest leader will be the greatest servant!

The authority for leaders in the church is not inherent in a position, but delegated by God and demonstrated through obedience to His word. A godly shepherd will never impose his will on someone, but gently and patiently lead the sheep to follow the voice of the Great shepherd (John 10; 2 Timothy 4:2).

## **Summary**

Modern society is suffering from an epidemic of leadership. But while the world wades in confusion over the role of men and women, men in Christ have the ability to become godly leaders and see their relationships prosper.

In Jesus Christ, we have the forgiveness of sin which makes possible the restoration of God's design for our relationships. In Him we also have the perfect model of loving leadership which can restore both the Harmonious Relationships and the Headship Responsibility for which we were made. And through submitting to the Holy Spirit we have the power to see it accomplished. No man who is a follower of Christ is exempt from the responsibility of seeing God's design worked out in all of his relationships.