

Introduction:

If you were to boil down the role of womanhood, especially as it comes to being a wife, to one word, what word would you choose? Think about that for a minute. This question should be a lot easier than last week's question about the husband because God Himself gave us the one word in **Genesis 2:18**: Helper. God set the agenda for the first marriage: work and keep the Garden in such a way that the first marriage was able to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. They were to spread the Sanctuary of God throughout the entire earth and populate it with image bearers for God's glory. But God saw and knew it was not good for man to be alone. He couldn't accomplish this job on his own. Then God, who is our help and our shield (**Psalms 33:20**), brought His help in human form to man in the form of wife. Sisters, that is your job in your marriages, help. You are the physical embodiment of God's grace in the marriage. Be ready, because by the end of this lesson, I'm going to ask you as wives to evaluate your helpfulness. In fact, as I did with your husbands last week, I'm going to challenge you to commit to getting input from your husbands on that evaluation by having a very hard but serious conversation with them, as you seek his input on the help you are giving.

In our previous lessons, we learned the mission and purpose of marriage as seen through the lens of the very first marriage between Adam and Eve. The mission of marriage is to represent the relationship between Christ and His church in such a way that the Sanctuary of God (the new garden city of God, Christ's church) is spread over the entire earth, populating it with image bearers who bring glory to God. The question you must ask, wives, is simply this: are you representing Christ's church through your helping in such a way that people in the world are saying, "If that is what it means to be in Christ's church, I want in"? Though Eve failed, in this lesson I'd like us to look at the role and responsibility in that first marriage in order to see yours. May you, by the grace and example of Christ, succeed where Eve failed.

Discussion:

I. In the Beginning: The Wife's Role

- A. In the lesson for the husbands we had to build a case for his role as priest in the family. By that, we meant that he represents God to the family and the family to God. Though hearing that lesson is not a prerequisite to being helped by this lesson, if you haven't listened to it or the previous lesson on the mission of marriage, I encourage you to go to our website and listen to both of those when you have the opportunity. We have a much easier time understanding the wife's role. In fact, we have already established it from **Genesis 2:18**. Wives, your role is helper. Your role is to help your husband accomplish the agenda God has established for your marriage, the agenda of spreading God's Sanctuary/Church over the earth and populating it with godly, image bearers (not simply through procreation, but mainly through spreading the gospel). This calls to mind **Proverbs 31:10-12** which says the excellent wife is trustworthy producing gain for her husband, doing good for him and not harming him all the days of her life.
- B. As we continue the metaphor with the husband as priest, that makes Eve, in essence, the first Levite. That is, as the Levites helped the priests serve in the tabernacle, then the temple, your role is to help your husband lead your family to serve God's house, city, kingdom. Sisters, I draw out this connection between husband/priest and wife/Levite to ask you not to make the mistake the Levites did in **Numbers 16** during Korah's rebellion.
  1. Consider Korah's words in **Numbers 16:3** to Moses and Aaron. "You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" (ESV). Our culture says this exact same thing of husbands who seek to fulfill their God-given role of head of their wife.
  2. However, listen to Moses's response in **Numbers 16:8-11**:

Hear now, you sons of Levi: is it too small a thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do service in the tabernacle of the LORD and to stand before the congregation to minister to them, and that he has brought you near him, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you? And would you seek the priesthood also? Therefore it is

against the LORD that you and all your company have gather together. What is Aaron that you grumble against him? (ESV)

3. The Levites did not appreciate the grace of God in their role. Sisters, do not miss the grace of God in yours. In fact, you are the very embodiment of grace in the marriage. Yes, I'm aware too many men do not appreciate that. That is why I preach on husbands first. But please, do not make the mistake the Levites did devaluing the role of helper. Without them, Aaron could not do his job. And without you, your husband cannot do his job.

## II. In the Beginning: The Wife's Responsibilities

### A. Wives, help yourselves by helping your husbands.

1. We can all agree Eve ultimately failed in her role as helper. She did, in fact, harm Adam as well as herself. When we examine her failure, we can learn by contrast your role as wives in the marriage.
2. When Eve listened to the serpent in **Genesis 3:1-6**, who was she trying to help? Adam? Or herself? And that gets to the heart of the advice offered to wives today. If you don't help yourself, no one else will. However, if you look at what happened to Eve, she looked out for herself. She tried to help herself, but ultimately not only harmed her husband but herself as well.
3. Many people get really upset by **Proverbs 31:23**. This excellent wife is doing all this work while the husband is known in the gates, sitting among the elders of the city. This wife is busy helping her husband and what does she get out of it? Actually, she gets pretty close to the same thing out of it that her husband does. In **Proverbs 31:30-31**, the proverbialist wrote: "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates" (ESV). Where is she known and praised? In the exact same place her husband is.
4. Wives, you have a choice. You can try to help yourself, by helping yourself. That was the path Eve chose. Or you can try to help yourself by helping your husband. That is the path the excellent wife chose.

### B. Wives, help your husbands in sincere devotion.

1. Though Eve's failure took place in **Genesis 3:1-6**, it takes Paul's words in **II Corinthians 11:2-4** to truly understand what her failure actually was. Paul says:

For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough (ESV).

Paul is relating what he did with the church in Corinth to what God did with Eve. Paul had betrothed the church in Corinth to one husband, Christ. In like manner, God had betrothed Eve to one husband, Adam. Paul is concerned that Satan will deceive the Corinthian church from its devotion to its one husband, Christ.

2. What then was actually happening when Satan tempted Eve?
  - a) The serpent was not asking Eve to doubt God, but to doubt her husband.
  - b) He was not asking her to sway from her devotion to God, but from her devotion to her husband.
  - c) The serpent did not attempt to get Eve to question God's love for her, wondering why on earth God would ever prohibit them from eating the tree of knowledge of good and evil when He knew it would actually be good for her. Rather, he was attempting to get Eve to question her husband's love for her.
  - d) Satan wanted Eve to believe Adam lied to her. God would not withhold the good of the tree from Eve, Adam was withholding that from her. Satan wanted Eve to believe God had said the tree would make them like gods, but Adam was holding Eve back from that.
  - e) And this is actually the genius of Satan's deception of Eve. Satan got Eve to disobey God all while convincing her that she was actually devoting herself to God.
3. Paul's concern for the Corinthians church was they would abandon their sincere and pure devotion to their one husband, just like Eve abandoned hers. She readily received a different teaching, letting the serpent act as her head, rather than her husband. Wives, your role is to help in sincere and pure devotion to your husband. That word translated "sincere" contains the idea of "singleness," that is, it is a single-minded devotion to the man God has joined you to. Paul describes this devotion in **Ephesians 5:33** by saying, "Let the wife see that she respects her husband" (ESV).
4. Wives, be devoted to your man, respecting him. Be loyal to your man. I know your man is flawed, but he is still the man God has joined you to. You are not to long for the leadership of some other man. You are

not to fantasize about marriage to some other man. Your man may not make as much money as some other man, have the same personality as some other man, have the same leadership style as some other man, have achieved the same accomplishments as some other man. But he is your man. Be devoted to your man. See the good God has put in your man. Honor the abilities, personality, gifts, leadership style God has gifted your man with. I promise you, if you were with some other man, you'd find out all that glitters isn't gold. You'd discover the darker side of those personalities and styles. So, respect your man, being devoted to him.

C. Wives, help your husbands in voluntary submission.

1. In the lesson for husbands, we learned how Satan turned the created order upside down. In creation, God made man, brought forth woman from man, and placed them in dominion over the beasts of the field. God→Man→Woman→Beasts. In the fall, the serpent, a crafty beast of the field (**Genesis 3:1**) led the woman who led the man who ignored God. Beast→Woman→Man→God. The entire order was turned upside down because Eve submitted to the serpent instead of her husband, Adam. Eve failed.
2. When Satan tempted Eve to abandon her single-minded devotion to Adam, the lure was being like God. That is, the lure for Satan's temptation was for Eve to assume headship over Adam, being God to Adam. In fact, that is what happened when she gave him the fruit to eat and he listened to her instead of God.
3. Sadly, her very first sin was destined to become the sticking point in marriage for all time. When God explained the consequences of the fall to Eve, He said, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (**Genesis 3:16**, ESV). God was not saying the wife would really, really want her husband. Rather, this is the exact same terminology used of Cain in **Genesis 4:7** in connection with sin: "And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it" (ESV). God wasn't saying sin simply had a desire for Cain. He was claiming sin's desire was to rule over Cain, but he must rule over sin.
4. God pointed out that the consequence of Eve's sin and the fall was the competition men and women have continually had and which has become even more apparent in our individualistic society. She was going to desire to rule the roost, but the husband was to be her head. Paul makes it clear in **Ephesians 5:24**, saying, "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands" (ESV).
5. Remember **Hebrews 13:17**. "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (ESV). Remember that your husband will give account not only for himself, but for you and your children. What a grand weight your husband is carrying. Don't be surprised when it freaks him out a little or when he takes it seriously. Help him have joy in his role by submitting rather than challenging his headship at every turn, even when you think your way is better.
6. Satan is continuing to tempt wives to ignore the creation order, to seize the reigns, to be the head of their husbands. Sadly, many husbands continue to commit the sin of Adam and hand that over. But wives, your role is to help in voluntary submission.

D. Wives, help your husbands overcome sin.

1. The absolute worse part of Eve's failure is that she was supposed to be helping Adam serve and guard the Garden of God. She was supposed to be helping him spread God's Sanctuary over the entire earth. That means, she was supposed to help him obey the Lord. Instead, she led him into sin. She did the exact opposite of what she was supposed to do.
2. Eve should have helped Adam stay away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Instead, she led him to it. Wives, please understand the influence you have over your husbands. You have the power to be an ally or an accomplice. An ally is someone who helps you have victory. An accomplice is someone who helps you get into trouble. Unlike Eve, you actually have God's Word that you can study as well. Be in God's Word. Live God's Word and help as your husband leads you and your family to surrender to God's Word.
3. Further, this means you are not to sit idly by as your husband sins. First, you are not to blindly follow your husband into sin. As **Acts 5:29** says, you are to obey God over man if your husband is leading you to sin. Additionally, we rarely think of this but **Matthew 18:15-20** applies to brothers and sisters in Christ who are married to one another. If your husband sins, you are to talk to him about it. Most of the time, he will repent. When he does, rejoice. If he doesn't, bring one or two with you to establish every charge at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Most of the time, he will repent. When he does, rejoice. If he doesn't, then bring it to the church. Our shepherds ask us to do this by bringing it to them. Most of the

time, he will repent. When he does, rejoice. If he doesn't, then the congregation will have to mark him. He is still your husband, and you are still his wife responsible to continue as his helper, but you have done the right thing to help him overcome his sin.

4. Finally, sometimes husband's sins are not only sins, but also crimes. **Romans 13:1-5** demonstrates God has established the civil authorities to exercise His wrath on the evildoer. Wives, if your husband is abusing you, there is nothing in the Bible that says you are to sit there and take it. That kind of evil is a sin and should be brought to your shepherds. It is also a crime and should be reported to the authorities. Yes, your goal should be his repentance and salvation. Nevertheless, when you simply sit by and allow that to continue you are not helping your husband.
  5. Remember, addressing your husband's sins in God-fearing, God-honoring ways with the goal to lead him to repentance, you are helping your husband.
- E. Wives, help your husbands by putting your hope in the Lord.
1. While Satan actively sought to get Eve to doubt her husband, there is also doubt in God. After all, if there was question about what God actually said, she could have asked God when He came into the Garden the next time. Additionally, if she really had faith in God's goodness for her, why would she think God would not correct Adam if he had misrepresented Him? If she wasn't certain she could trust Adam, she should have been certain she could trust the Lord.
  2. Wives, I know the world is telling you to throw off your husband's headship. I know society is telling you you don't need your man. I know culture is telling you this old, traditional patriarchy is for the birds. It's time to get with the 21<sup>st</sup> century, catch up with the Enlightenment, and leave the dark ages of your husband's headship behind. Further, I know that your husband, no matter how hard he tries, is no Jesus. Even the best of us fail repeatedly, making it easy to want to abandon God's creation order for marriage. But if you won't help your husband as we've described because you trust your husband, do so because you trust your Lord and Savior.
  3. According to **Ephesians 5:21**, all submission in any relationship is out of reverence for Christ. In other words, even if you don't submit to your husband because you revere Him, do so because you revere your Savior who has called you to it. As **Proverbs 31:30** explains, the excellent wife is so not because of her fear/reverence of her husband but because of her fear/reverence for Yahweh. Finally, **I Peter 3:5** explains that the women of old submitted to their husbands because their hope was in God.
  4. Our culture today is telling you the only hope you have is yourself. Throw off your husband and pursue your dreams, be your own head because that is the only hope you have. That simply isn't true. The only hope we have is the Lord. It is the Lord that has established your role as helper. Do you trust Him? I can't promise you when you live as a helper that your husband will live as he is supposed to anymore than I could promise your husbands that when He lives like Jesus in the marriage you will behave like you are supposed to. Sometimes it just doesn't happen. But I can promise you God will always behave as He has promised. Put your hope in Him and His coming reward for those who submit to Him.

### III. Jesus Succeeded Where Eve Failed

- A. I had a really hard time preparing this lesson compared to the lesson for husbands. In part that is because it was very easy to provide the husbands with a contrast. Would we be Adam or Jesus in our marriage? It is not nearly as easy to say to wives, "Will you be Eve or the church in your marriage?" First, that is conceptually hard to wrap our minds around. But even more so the problem is churches, as we experience them, often end up failing too. Jesus always succeeds, but the whole reason we need Jesus is because the church often fails.
- B. Then I remembered **I Corinthians 11:3**. "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God" (ESV). In this verse, wives, you find yourselves very much in the same boat as Jesus Christ, God the Son. As you are very much of the same nature as your husband, Christ is of the same nature as the Father. As you are just as valuable as your husband, Christ is just as valuable as the Father. As you are just as worthy as your husband, Christ is just as worthy as the Father. As you are just as important in the marriage as your husband, Christ is just as important in the Godhead as the Father. On the comparisons could go. Yet, the Father is the head of the Christ, and, therefore, Christ is the helper to the Father.
- C. When it came time to leave the glories of heaven, come into the world in sacrifice for the church, Christ had every right to complain that He was equal to the Father and should not have to submit to the Father in this plan. Yet, **Philippians 2:5-11** explains while the Christ had every right to demand this place, He accepted His submission to the Father voluntarily because something was more important to Him than His rights. Because of that, Christ was ultimately highly exalted.

- D. Wives, though we are looking at it from a different angle, like your husbands, you have a choice? Will you be Eve in your marriage, or will you be Jesus?

#### Conclusion:

Folks, being the helper in any relationship is not for the faint of heart. But Jesus surrendered and took that role in His relationship with the Father. Praise the Lord! Thus, before I address the wives, I want to address everyone. A day is coming when each and every one of us will give account to God for ourselves. I promise you on that day you will want the help of Jesus Christ. You will want the grace that comes from His sacrifice for you. You can stand before God alone or you can stand before Him with Jesus at your side as your helper. In just a moment, when we sing our song, we'll give you opportunity to come forward and let Jesus be your Savior, by being baptized for the remission of your sins, being buried with Jesus in water and raised to walk in new life.

Sisters, let me say it again, being the helper is not for the faint of heart. Some of you are thinking about becoming a wife. Think long and hard. Understand what you are signing up for. Some of you knew what you were signing up for and did it anyway. Praise God for you. How blessed your husbands are. Some of you are hearing for the first time what your role and responsibilities are. In any event, I don't want to leave you with merely a generic and fuzzy challenge to be a better wife. You didn't need this sermon to know you need to do that, did you? I want to leave you with a specific and clear challenge. Wives, God joined you to your husband to be his helper. Have you been helping him or hindering him? Have you been helping him or helping yourself? So, here is your challenge. Talk to your husband. Begin by surrendering to his leadership in your role as helper. Have a conversation with him this week based on the questions at the end of the interactive outline. Last week I called for husbands to make a commitment to have a conversation with you. It was a hard conversation. But many of them committed and followed through. I want to ask you to make that same commitment. Whether privately or publicly, commit to seeking your husband's input on your role. I invite you to make that commitment known as so many of your husbands did last week. Make it to your God, to yourself, and even make it tonight to your shepherds and your brothers and sisters. Will you make this commitment?

#### **A conversation with your husband:**

The following questions are for wives to ask their husbands.

Husbands, please remember this is hard conversation for your wives, putting them in a very vulnerable spot. They are putting a great deal of trust in you just by being willing to have this conversation. Please treat your wife with the grace you wanted to receive when you had your conversation with her. And do that whether or not she extended that grace to you. Even if you have to address sin, please do so gently as **Galatians 6:1** teaches.

Wives, truth hurts sometimes. Be prepared to hear hard things. Promise your husband absolute safety. That means no raise voices and no defensiveness. It means no ongoing punishment following this conversation. Ask the questions, listen to the answers. If you need clarification, lovingly ask for that. If you start to get angry, ask for a break, set a time to pick up the conversation again later, then go distract yourself with something else (work, working out, hobby, etc.).

1. Let's begin with the positive. Please give me some examples of what I'm doing well as your wife.
2. Would you say that I am a help to you? If so, let me know in what ways I'm helping so I can increase and improve those. If not, what would be a good way for me to start being a help to you?
3. Would you say that I respect you with single-minded devotion? If so, what behaviors make you feel that respect and devotion the most? If not, what are some behaviors I can quit, modify, or start that will help you sense that respect and devotion?
4. Does my behavior give you a sense of joy when you consider having to give account for me? If so, which behaviors help that? If not, what can I do to help you have that sense of joy?
5. What are some safe ways I can respectfully address sin in your life?
6. What can I do to make it easier for you to love and lead me in God's agenda for our marriage?