PAUL’S THEOLOGY OF THE HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP

by Jismyl Lam

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

New life in Christ is more than just an internal transformation; it manifests itself externally in all areas of the believer’s life. One of these areas concerns the relationship between the husband and the wife. The purpose of the study is to trace Paul’s theology of the husband-wife relationship by examining all passages which concern the relationship and roles of husband and wife in the chief epistles (1 Cor 7:1-7; 1 Cor 7:25-40; 1 Cor 11:3-16; 1 Cor 14:34-35; Rom 7:1-4); in the prison epistles (Col 3:18-19; Eph 5:22-33); and in the pastoral epistles (1 Tim 2:11-15; 3:2-5; 3:11-12; 5:8-9, 14; Titus 1:6; 2:3-5).

Method of the Study

The first stage of this study involves identifying all passages concerning the husband and wife in Paul’s writing by consulting Strong’s Concordance. From this list of passages, cross-references in the Bible are examined to develop a more extensive list. For the exegesis of the passages, a preliminary understanding of first century Greco-Roman culture and Jewish culture is examined, then the theology of the husband-wife relationship is developed by comparing Paul’s teachings in each passage.

Scope of the Study

This study will focus on Paul’s writings and a comparison will be made to Peter’s teachings in 1 Pet 3:1-7. Illustrations and comparisons from first century Roman-Greco culture and Jewish culture will be noted when applicable since Paul was addressing believers who lived in those cultures.

Limitations of the Study

The paper will not cover all the passages in the New Testament concerning husband-wife relationships. It will be limited to the Pauline epistles and Petrine epistle. It is also assumed that Paul is

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the author of the thirteen epistles which are commonly ascribed to him.3

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE HUSBAND AND THE WIFE

It is evident from Paul’s writings that he has a high regard for marriage even though he says that those who have the gift of singleness are able to fully devote themselves to God (1 Cor 7:7, 32-35). Paul is not advocating celibacy over marriage, but stating that it is only natural for husbands and wives to devote themselves to their families.4 In fact, he encourages the singles and young widows to marry (1 Cor 7:8; 1 Tim 5:14) and considers marriage to be the normal state for members in the Christian church.5 Paul’s high view of marriage is evident from his instructions about fidelity in marriage, the permanence of marriage, and the husband-wife relationship and responsibilities to one another in the Lord.

Marital and Sexual Fidelity

Paul considers the relationship between a husband and wife to be important since it is a life-long commitment and only death breaks the union (1 Cor 7:10-11, 27, 39; Rom 7:1-4).6 Even in a situation when one of the spouses is an unbeliever, Paul instructs the believer to remain in the marriage (1 Cor 7:12-16).7 Furthermore, both children and the unbelieving spouse will have an advantage for salvation as a result of the believing spouse’s personal relationship with God.8

In fact, Paul states that marital and sexual fidelity are determinative in the choice of deacons (1 Tim 3:12) and overseers (1 Tim 3:2-5, Tit 1:6) in the church.9 Paul also instructs husbands and wives to fulfill their conjugal duties toward each other (1 Cor 7:4).10 Abstinence should only be based on mutual agreement for the purpose of prayer (1 Cor 7:5), but not for a prolonged period since it can adversely


4Simon J. Kistemaker, 1 Corinthians., p. 247.

5This is consistent with Old Testament teachings since God has instituted marriage from the beginning when He created Adam and Eve (Gen 2:18, 20-24), so that they will become one flesh.

6In 1 Cor 7:11-12, Paul makes an allusion to Jesus’ teaching (Matt 19:2-10 and Mark 10:11-12), that God has instituted marriage as a life long union and no man is to break the union. Kistemaker, p. 221; Gordon Fee, 1 Corinthians, NICNT, p. 222.

7In the Greco-Roman culture women were allowed to divorce their husbands, but not for women of the Jewish culture. Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, p. 69.

8Kistemaker, p. 225.

9Robert L. Thomas, Ralph Earle, & D. Edmond Hiebert, 1, 2 Thessalonians. 1, 2 Timothy. Titus, EBC, p. 138; George W. Knight III, The Pastoral Epistles, NIGTC, pp. 158-59; 173.

10Ibid, p. 212. The use of the words “fulfill” and “duty” implies that “married couples are indebted to one another sexually.” Fee, p. 279.
affect the relationship (1Cor 7:2-7).\textsuperscript{11} Paul seems to indicate that with respect to intimate sexual relations, they are to mutually submit to each other (vs. 4-5).\textsuperscript{12}

However, the relationship between the husband and wife is not merely a sexual relationship. It also involves a hierarchical relationship. Even though God has conferred equal worth to man and woman as both are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), the husband and wife are not given equal rights in an unqualified sense.\textsuperscript{13} Egalitarians argue that Paul proclaims the removal of distinctions in Gal 3:28 because the believers’ new identity in Christ is one of equality without hierarchy.\textsuperscript{14} However, this argument does not stand since Paul’s intention in this passage “is to establish a theological point, a point of soteriology, not to expound the proper social relationships of men and women in the Church.”\textsuperscript{15} Furthermore, this soteriological “oneness in Christ” does not negate distinctions in the family and in the church since Paul later sets out in detail “the distinctions in roles, offices, and gifts within the family (cf. Ephesians 5:22-69; Colossians 3:18-4:1) and in the church (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 12:1-31; 1 Timothy 2:9-15).”\textsuperscript{16} Therefore, unity and equality in Christ does not necessarily imply functional interchangeability; in the marriage relationship, God has appointed the husband to the leader of the family.\textsuperscript{17}

Male Headship and Woman’s Submission

The pattern for male headship and woman’s submission is based on the headship of God, the Father over Jesus Christ, and of Christ’s headship over the church. Paul elucidates this in 1 Cor 11:2-16, and explains in greater details in Eph 5:22-24 and Col 3:18-19.

1 Corinthians 11:3-16. The context of 1 Cor 11:3-16 basically concerns adornment during the worship service and Paul instructs the Corinthians on a practice which reflects the principle of male

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11}Ibid, pp. 210, 215.
\item \textsuperscript{12}Kistemaker, p. 212.
\item \textsuperscript{13}Raymond C. Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, p. 105.
\item \textsuperscript{14}Katherine M. Haubert, Women as Leaders, pp. 30-32; F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of the Galatians, NIGTC, p. 190. Egalitarians argue that Gal 3:28 has implications for the family and church community, and that it is the interpretive filter which determines the meaning of other passages.
\item \textsuperscript{16}S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. “Role Distinctions in the Church: Galatians 3:28,” in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, p. 161.
\item \textsuperscript{17}Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality,” p. 105.
\end{itemize}
headship. This principle, when applied to the Corinthian church, requires women to wear head coverings so that they do not violate the established creation order and order in nature when they pray or prophesy. The most plausible view concerning the adornment is a head covering of some kind rather than wearing the hair piled up on the head since the cultural practice of that time as indicated in archaeological findings and literary evidences show that Paul is dealing with head coverings.

Verses 3-10 give a sustained argument from the order of creation for male headship and female submission. In verse 3, the most highly debated element is the meaning of the word “head” (kephale). The meaning of “head” most likely carries the concept of “authority” but does not necessarily exclude the meaning of “source.” However the Septuagint, which Paul is well acquainted with, does not use “head” as “source.” Elsewhere in Paul’s writing, the headship of Christ refers to His authority. In Eph 1:22, all things are subjected to Christ the head which means that He has authority over all things. This fits the context which “focuses on the enthronement of Christ and His exaltation,” and certainly supports the meaning of “head” as “authority.” In Col 2:15, Christ is the “head over all rule and authority.” Here the word “head” obviously means “authority.” In Eph 5:22-23, Paul parallels the headship of Christ with the headship of the husband, which is very similar to 1 Cor 11:3 and both verses state that the wife is to submit to the husband just as the church submits to Christ. Therefore to argue that the husband is the source of the wife is exegetically not viable since the idea of “authority” is

18Mary A. Kassian, Women, Creation and the Fall, p. 93. Also see Susan T. Foh, Women and the Word of God, pp. 100-1. Susan gives an insightful remark that “Paul may be providing a theological foundation for what the Corinthians are already doing.” Ben Witherington III, Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians, p. 235.

19Ibid, pp. 234-35. Witherington suggests that Paul is referring to those women who were taking an active part in the service.

20Thomas R. Schreiner, “Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity,” in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, pp. 125-26. The word covering (peribolaios) in 11:15 refers to a “wrap around,” and the words Paul uses for “covering” in verses 4-6 and 13 indicate a shawl or some kind of covering. Also the usage of the word “cover” (katakalypto) which occurs three times in verses 6-7, and its cognate in verses 5 and 13, almost universally refers to some kind of covering. Also see Fee, p. 496. According to Fee, the covering is probably the “loose end of an outer garment known as the himation (himation), or a loosely fitting light linen cloth,” rather than the full veil worn by the Muslims. Also see Witherington, p. 233; Kassian, pp. 95-96. Plutarch and Philo used the same term kata kephales as Paul to refer to “something resting on the head, not hair and much less long, flowing hair.”

21Kistemaker, p. 367.


23Schreiner, “Head Coverings,” p. 127.
more congruent with the idea of submitting.²⁴

When Paul states that “God is the head of Christ,” he does not mean that there is an ontological difference between God and Christ, but that a functional difference exists between members of the Trinity (1 Cor 15:28).²⁵ Since Christ’s subjection to the Father does not mean He is inferior to the Father, the wife’s subjection to her husband also does not imply any sense of inferiority; it only means that she fulfills a different role in the home and in the church.²⁶ Also in vs. 11-12, Paul says that women are not inferior even though they are created for men’s glory (vs. 7-10). Basically, the hierarchical relationship involves a difference in economy or function without a difference in essence.²⁷

The distinction between men and women continues to be emphasized in verses 4-6. In contrast to women, men are not to cover their heads when they pray or prophesy. This primarily concerns gender distinctions, so that the sexes will not be confused.²⁸ More importantly, to do otherwise is to bring shame and dishonor and it means that “if one does not conform to the role God intended, one brings dishonor on oneself and on one’s authority.”²⁹

In verses 7-12, Paul supports his teachings from the OT by arguing from Creation (vs. 8-9; 11-12). From the very beginning, God has intended a role difference between man and woman even though they are mutually dependent (vs. 11-12).³⁰ It seems that Paul wants women to wear head coverings because the adornment not only distinguishes men from women, but is a sign or symbol of male headship over women (v. 10).³¹ In verses 13-16, Paul draws his argument from nature which

²⁴Ibid, Witherington, p. 237. Neither is Paul speaking about Adam as the source of Eve since Paul is addressing husbands and wives in general.


²⁷This level of hierarchical relationship is used elsewhere in Paul’s writings such as 1 Cor 15:27-28; Eph 5:22-23; Col 3:18; and Tit 2:5. Neuer, p. 111.


²⁹Ibid, pp. 131-32. Also see Kassian, p. 98. Again, Paul does not forbid women to participate in church worship, but states that the women are to do so in a demeanor which is in submission to male leadership.

³⁰James B. Hurley, “Did Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women?” WTJ 35, no. 2 (1973):212-13. In verses 8-9, Paul makes an allusion to Gen 2:21-23 and Paul also alludes to Gen 2:21-23 in his argument for role distinctions in 1 Tim 2:8-15. Egalitarians, on the other hand, argue that the creation account does not support any role distinctions which only arise as a result of the fall. Bilezikian, pp. 21-41.

³¹Schreiner, “Head Coverings,” pp. 134-5. Also see Fee, p. 502; M. D. Hooker, “Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor xi. 10,” NTS 10 (1964): 410-16. Verse 10 is a difficult verse. The original Greek states that the woman is to have authority on her head. The English translations have added “a symbol” (NASB), “a sign” (NIV), and “a veil” (RSV) and translated “authority” in the passive form. Both Hooker and Fee see the “authority” as a reference to the woman’s own authority. However, the focus of v. 10 is not on the woman’s freedom or right but on the woman’s
Schreiner defines as the “natural instincts and psychological perceptions of masculinity and femininity manifested in particular cultural situations.”

Susan Foh may be right in stating that it includes both the “sense of God’s revelation of himself in the world and the knowledge of God’s law placed in every one’s heart (Rom 2:15).” For women to wear head coverings is to be “in accord with the God-given sense that women and men are different.” In v. 16, Paul strongly concludes that those who are contentious disobey his teaching as well as the teachings of the other churches.

**Ephesians 5:22-33 and Colossians 3:18-19.** Ephesians presents a detailed instruction concerning marriage while Col 3:18-19 gives the main points of Paul’s teaching. The husband’s love for his wife is beautifully described and illustrated in Eph 5:22-33. The two analogies used, that of Christ loving the church and the man loving himself, specify the extent of the husband’s love for his wife. Not only does it involve sacrifice, but it also involves a sense of respect for his wife. Since the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, he is to take the initial step in developing the marriage relationship. His love for her should not be dependent on what she can do or how submissive she is, because Christ loved and died for the church when she was still in sin and rebellion (Rom 5:8).

In Eph 5:21-33, the instructions on marriage flow from v.21; that is, believers are to submit to one another in the fear of the Lord. It is often argued that the call to mutual submission in verse 21 erases any notion of hierarchy or authority and that the husband should submit in the same way as the wife submits to him. However, Paul also addresses the parent-child and master-slave relationships in the same section, which implies that mutual submission is not the only thing in view here. Role distinctions and hierarchy still exist in the husband-wife relationship, and in verses 22-33, Paul delineates the distinctive roles as well as the attitude of submission and leadership by comparison with the relationship between Christ and the church. Furthermore, the New Testament often states that the wife is to submit to her husband, but husbands are never commanded to submit to their wives.

In Eph 5:22 and Col 3:18, Paul specifically commands wives to submit to their own husbands.

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32 Schreiner, “Head Coverings,” p. 137. Also Paul elsewhere uses the same word “nature” in Rom 1:26-27, where he refers to “the natural and instinctive sense of right and wrong that God has planted in us, especially with respect to sexuality.”

33 Foh, p. 115.

34 Schreiner, “Head Coverings,” p. 137.


36 Bilezikian, pp. 165-70; Haubert, p. 46.


This adds to the instruction in 1 Cor 11:2-16. Paul does not ask every woman to submit to every man, but only in certain situations such as leadership in the church (1 Cor 11:2-16) and in the marriage. The nature of the wife’s submission is such that she is to submit to her husband in all aspects of life, not just in certain areas such as sex.\(^{39}\) In addition, the use of the word “submit” or “subordinate” which occurs about twenty-three times in Paul’s writing, usually “carries an overtone of authority and subjection or submission,” yet the same word is used to describe the attitude Christians are to have toward each other, whether they are in a “dominating” or “subordinate” position. This indicates that “the notion of inferior dignity need not be present in the term.”\(^{40}\)

More importantly, the motivation involved is rooted in her submission to the Lord (Eph 5:22), and that it “is fitting in the Lord” (Col 3:18), which means that the wife’s submission to her husband is a natural characteristic of one who is in godly submission to Christ.\(^{41}\) Knight is also right in stating that “such submission . . . is appropriate to being under the Lordship of Christ or, to paraphrase, of being a Christian.”\(^{42}\) Basically Paul meant that “redemption in Christ undergirds and commends the wife’s submission to her husband according to God’s design at creation.”\(^{43}\) This answers the objections raised by feminists that submission is only rooted in the Fall, and that redemption in Christ releases the wife subjection to her husband. Instead, as Christians, it is only appropriate for wives to submit to their husbands. Paul further states that the wife is to have an attitude of respect (\(\phi o b e o\)) for her husband’s God-given leadership (Eph 5:33).\(^{44}\)

The counterpart to the wife’s submission is the husband’s duty to love his wife (Eph 5:25-33; Col 3:18). His love is not to be merely “a matter of affectionate feeling” or “sexual attraction” but “involves his unceasing care and loving service for her entire well-being.”\(^{45}\) Paul also instructs husbands not to abuse their authority but to exhibit sacrificial love their wife as Christ loved the church (Eph 3:25).\(^{46}\) O’Brien aptly states:

\(^{39}\)Knight, “Husbands and Wives” p. 170.

\(^{40}\)Peter T. O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon, pp. 221-22; Knight, “Husbands and Wives,” pp. 168-69. The use of the verb for “submit” (\(\hat{h}u p o t a s \theta\)) here in Eph 5:22, 24 as well as in Col 3:18, Tit 2:4; 1 Pet 3:1, is in the middle/passive, which “focuses on what one does to oneself,” and this implies that the submission is not by force nor out of a sense of inferiority.

\(^{41}\)Melick, p. 312; Knight, “Husbands and Wives,” p. 174. It is definitely not Stoic in origin.

\(^{42}\)Ibid. Also see O’Brien, p. 222.


\(^{44}\)Knight, “Husbands and Wives,” p. 175.

\(^{45}\)O’Brien, p. 223; Melick, p. 313.

\(^{46}\)Paul’s instruction definitely stands apart from the teachings of Greco-Roman and Jewish culture. Typically the women were regarded as second class citizens. Greek men considered women to be intellectually inferior and interacted mainly on the sexual level. The foundation for marriage was not based on love, and affections in marriage were considered a bonus. The husband had absolute control over his wife and children. In the Jewish culture, wives were also
If the husband heeds this apostolic injunction, he will not behave in an overbearing manner; all areas of married life will be characterized by this self-giving love and forgiveness (cf. 3:13). The original order of the Creator, which was troubled by the rule of sin and self-centeredness and which ended in the tyranny of eros and the slavery of sex (cf. 3:5), can be lived in love and forgiveness.  

It is sometimes argued that the instructions given in Eph 5:21-33 and Col 3:18-19 are not normative for today since the list of duties merely reflects the cultural concerns of the day. A number of scholars allegedly named these two passages as well as others (Tit 2:1-10; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 6:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-3:7) as Haustafeln, that is, household rules which regulated the relationships within the household, which were adopted because of the delay in the parousia, or to regulate the desire for emancipation, false teachings, or for the spread of the gospel. However, there is only no formal parallel between the alleged Haustafeln in the NT and non-Christian or pre-Christian literature. Paul and the NT writers were dealing with the same subject matter as the other writers such as Aristotle or Philo, but the form and content of their writings differ. Furthermore, the instructions given in the NT are either grounded in the OT or of Christological motivation and occur in the contexts of “ethical instruction in relationships among Christians.”

Also, the assertion that the submission of wives to their husbands stands or falls together with the existence and submission of slaves to their masters does not hold. This is because God instituted marriage but not slavery at Creation (Gen 2:21-24). Furthermore, in the analogy of Christ and the church (Eph 5:23-32), Paul quoted from Gen 2:24 (v. 31), which indicates that marriage was “designed by God [sic] from the beginning to be a picture or parable of the relationship between Christ and the
This significantly argues that the injunctions given to the wife and husband are not culturally bound since they are grounded in God’s original plan for a harmonious and perfect marriage.54

THE HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP IN 1 PETER 3:1-7

Peter’s instruction which begins with the exhortation of the wife’s submission to her husband is very similar to Paul’s (Eph 5:22-33; Col 2:18-19).55 Peter’s use of the word “submit” is also consistent with the concept of a voluntary subjection of oneself to authority without any implications of inferiority, yet the use of the word “submit” is always in the sense of obedience to authority.56 He urged Christian wives to submit to the leadership of their unbelieving husbands, as long as it is “within the limits of obedience to Christ.”57 This is also consistent with Paul’s instruction to believers not to leave their unbelieving spouse (1 Cor 7:13-16), so that through the wife’s “chaste conduct,” she may win him to Christ.58

Paul gave the “divine pattern and spiritual motivation” for wives’ voluntary submission to their husbands in Eph 5:22-33, and Peter adds to the instructions by giving an illustration of how “holy women” of the past submitted to their husbands through the example of Sarah’s respectful obedience to her husband, Abraham (vs. 5-6).59 Furthermore, this obedient submission is to be characterized by an inner spiritual attitude of the heart, that of a “gentle and quiet spirit,” rather than an outward artificial adornment.60 This instruction to Christian wives is certainly universal and binding today because the emphasis on inward adornment implies that even if the outward adornment of women changes from one culture to another, it is the inner quiet and gentle spiritual disposition which God requires of church.”53

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54Ibid. Also see Melick, pp. 309-10.
55D. E. Balch Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter, pp. 81-109. Balch claims that 1 Pet 3:1-7 also a household code like Eph 5:22-33 and Col 2:18-19, and that here it has an apologetic function, therefore it is only relevant to the early Christians living in the Greco-Roman culture. However, this accuses Peter of commanding Christians to follow the cultural requirements of that day rather than the morally binding authoritative Word of God. Grudem, “Wives Like Sarah,” p. 204.
57This follows from his instruction in 1 Pet 2:11-12. See Grudem, “Wives Like Sarah,” p. 194-96. See Grudem’s listing of what submission does not entail.
58D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter, pp. 197-98.
59Hiebert, pp. 195, 203; Grudem, “Wives Like Sarah,” p. 196; 202. Grudem suggests that “Peter’s insistence on doing what is right is a reminder that no acts of disobedience in Sarah’s life are to be imitated by Christian wives (cf. Genesis 16:2, 6; 18:15; perhaps 20:5); it is her submission to her husband and her trust in God that Peter commends.” Sarah’s reference to Abraham as “lord” reflects her respect for him.
Christian wives toward their husbands.\textsuperscript{61} Being “precious in God’s sight” also implies that the motivation is to please God rather than the fear of men, which is the recurring reason (“the Lord’s sake,” “the will of God,” “fear God”) for the Christian’s conduct in the world.\textsuperscript{62}

Peter reminds husbands of their obligations and placed a limit on their authority (v.7). They are not to abuse their authority but to be considerate towards their wives, and to honor them, because they are the “weaker vessels.”\textsuperscript{63} Grudem suggests that the “knowledge” or “understanding” in verse 7 is probably a reference to “actual knowledge or information” which is beneficial to a husband-wife relationship.\textsuperscript{64} Although Peter does not specify what he means by “weaker vessel,” the context probably suggests differences in physical strengths, authority, and emotional sensitivity and vulnerability.\textsuperscript{65}

There is no implication that the wife is considered of lesser worth since Peter says that both husband and wife are heirs of the grace of life (v.7). Also, Peter gives a strong warning to husbands regarding their duty towards their wives. They are to treat their wives in a considerate manner since this affects their relationship to God in the area of their prayer life.\textsuperscript{66} Hiebert aptly states that “unworthy home relations hinder prayers . . . a man’s fellowship with God is closely related to his relations to his fellow beings (Matt 5:22-23; 18:19-35; James 4:1-4; 1 John 4:19-21).”\textsuperscript{67}

Peter’s instructions to husbands and wives again recognizes the differences between masculinity and femininity as God has intended. Husbands and wives do well to recognize their differences in their relationships with one another.

\textbf{Applications in Daily Lives}

Although a cultural gap exists between the early church and the contemporary church, Paul’s instructions are still applicable today. Both the husband and wife are equal before God with respect to

\textsuperscript{61}Ibid, p. 205.

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid; Osiek & Balch, pp. 56-57; Bell, p. 227. It is rather significant for the Christian wives to be reminded not to fear since their situation of being in a mixed marriage with a non-Christian husband could be a difficult thing. In the Greco-Roman culture, the husband is the patria potesta who had absolute control over the wife including matters of religion.

\textsuperscript{63}This instruction is again radically different from how husbands of the Greco-Roman world viewed their wives. See Osiek & Balch, pp. 56-57; Bell pp. 195-96; 227. See Grudem for his discussion on how husbands are not to abuse their leadership. Grudem, “Wives Like Sarah,” pp. 205-07.

\textsuperscript{64}Grudem, “Wives Like Sarah,” p. 207. He suggests that this knowledge is “God’s purposes and principles for marriage; of the wife’s desires, goals, frustrations; of her strengths and weaknesses in the physical, emotional and spiritual realms.”

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid, p. 206. Also see Foh, p. 133.

\textsuperscript{66}Grudem, “Wives Like Sarah,” p. 208. Grudem suggests that Peter was referring to the husband’s prayer being hindered if he does not live with his wife in “an understanding way” and “bestowing honor” on her. Also see Hiebert, pp. 207-08. Hiebert suggests Peter may also be referring to “family worship.”

\textsuperscript{67}Idem.
creation and redemption, yet God has created them to fulfill different roles in marriage and in the church.

The Distinctive Role of the Husband

Since God has called the husband to be the head of the family, he is to be the leader and to exercise his headship in a way loving, gentle and considerate way (Col 3:19; Eph 5:25, 1 Pet 3:7). He is to respect his wife and not control her like a child by making all the decisions. Rather, he should respect her input and ideas concerning the care and discipline of the children, as well as other family matters such as relocation or changes that will affect the family as a whole. However, as the head of the marriage, he is to make the final decision in matters when there is no mutual agreement.68

The husband is also to be the primary provider for the family. This is implied from passages where Paul states that he is to “provide for his own” (1 Tim 5:8), and from the judgment given to Adam after the Fall that he will be difficult for him to toil in the fields (Gen 3:17-19).69 But the husband is also responsible for the care, discipline and instruction of the children (Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 3:4; Col 3:21). The importance of this is implied in 1 Tim 3:1-5, where the ability of the man to manage his household is considered a qualification for being the pastor or elder in the church.

As the God ordained head of the family, the husband is also responsible for instructing his wife concerning spiritual matters (1 Cor 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15).70 In the context of 1 Cor 14:33-34, women are not to “participate in the oral weighing” of prophecies.71 This is considered to be an authoritative function, similar to authority teaching (1 Tim 2:11-12) which is the responsibility of men in the church during a public church worship setting.72

The Distinctive Role of the Wife

God has called the wife to submit to the headship of her husband in a respectful and willing manner (Col 3:18; Eph 5:24, 33; 1 Pet 3:1-2). Just as the church is to be devoted to Christ, the wife is to be submission (1 Cor 11:8, 9; 2 Tim 2:13).

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69 Knight states that “the man . . . is called on to fulfill his role by directing his time and energy outward from the family in the work area (cf. again God’s evaluation of what is characteristic of man as a male, Genesis 3:17-19).” Knight, “The Family and the Church: How Should Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Work Out in Practice,” in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, p. 530.

70 See Carson for a extensive discussion of the different views regarding the interpretation of 1 Cor 14:33-34. D. A. Carson, “Silent in the Churches: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,” in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, pp. 141-51. 1 Cor 14:34-35 is found in the context of order during worship and the regulation of the use of spiritual gifts such as prophecy and tongues. Paul is not commanding the absolute silence of women, neither does it contradict 1 Cor 11:3-16 where women are allowed to pray and prophesy.

71 Ibid, p. 151.

72 Ibid, p. 152. Furthermore, the appeal to the Law is an appeal to O.T. Scripture, probably an allusion to Gen 2, concerning the order of Creation on which Paul consistently based his argument for male headship and female submission (1 Cor 11:8, 9; 2 Tim 2:13).
devoted to her husband. Her devotion is manifested in fulfilling her responsibilities in the home. In Titus 2:4-5, Paul exhorts the older women to teach the younger women to be “homemakers,” and younger widows are encouraged to marry (1 Tim 5:14) to fulfill their primary responsibility in managing the house. This means that the wife is not only to bear and rear children (1 Tim 2:15), but to take care of the administrative duties of the household under the leadership of her husband, who is to “grant her the necessary and appropriate freedom of operation.” However, this does not mean that the wife is not allowed to work outside the home as long as she does not neglect her primary responsibilities. Prov 31:10-31 depicts a wife and mother whose responsibilities extended beyond the domestic cares of the home, yet the family was well taken care of. Also, the wife should be under the leadership of the husband as far as the decision to work outside the home is concerned.

Women’s submission also means that they are prohibited from teaching or ruling men in the church (1 Tim 2:11-12) because it is also grounded in God’s Creation order, a permanent principle regarding the distinctive roles of men and women, which is not bounded by time or culture. However, the women in the church have the important role of instructing younger women regarding their relations and responsibilities in the home (Tit 2:3-5).

CONCLUSION

The consistent principle that is found in both Pauline and Petrine theology is that man and woman are equal in essence but different in economy. The distinctive roles for the husband and wife are consistently prescribed with the key terms “be subject” for wives and “head” for husbands. These roles are divinely ordained since Paul frequently appeals to the Creation events in his instructions (1 Cor 11:8-9, Eph 5:31, and 1 Tim 2:13-14). As such, the headship of the husband and submission of the wife are grounded in the Creation order. The manner in which the roles are to be fulfilled is according to the analogue relationship of Christ, the Head, and the Church, His body. The attitudes of the husband and wife toward each other must reflect the relationship between Christ and His church. The husband is to exercise his leadership in a loving manner which nourishes and cherishes his wife, honoring her without expressing bitter anger towards her. The wife is to willingly submit to her husband in all aspects in a respectful manner just as she submits to the Lord, Jesus Christ. Both husband and wife are to strive at developing a relationship where there is mutual trust and understanding, where the wife complements her husband’s leadership, and this only comes through opened communications between the husband and the wife. Because of the effects of sin, the husband will have a natural tendency to dominate and rule the wife in an unloving way, and the wife will have the natural desire to take control.

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73 According to Knight, “the Greek word οἰκοδεσπότης, which is rendered ‘manage,’ is a very forceful term.” Knight, “The Family and the Church,” p. 350.

and refuse to submit to her husband (Gen 3:16). Therefore, both the husband and wife are to seek God’s grace and dependence on the Holy Spirit to fulfill their God-given roles with the right attitudes and actions.