



FINDING GOD'S PLAN FOR RELATIONSHIPS

I. Definitions of Womanhood and Manhood

1. A Real Woman

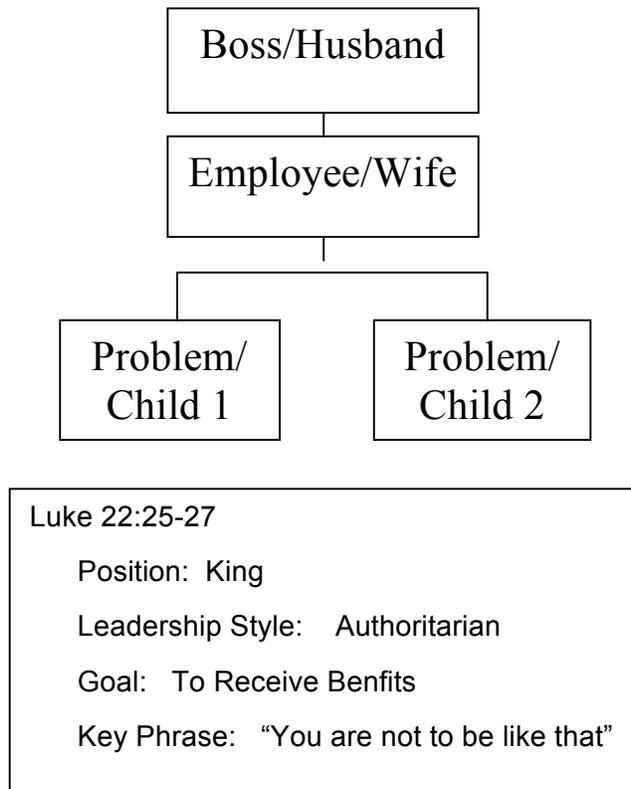
A Real Woman is one who rejects worldly temptations for significance, embraces God's design for relationships, nurtures the next generation, and expects the greater reward—God's reward.

2. A Real Man

A Real Man is one who rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, leads courageously, and expects the greater reward—God's reward.

II. Two Modern Views of the Marriage Relationship

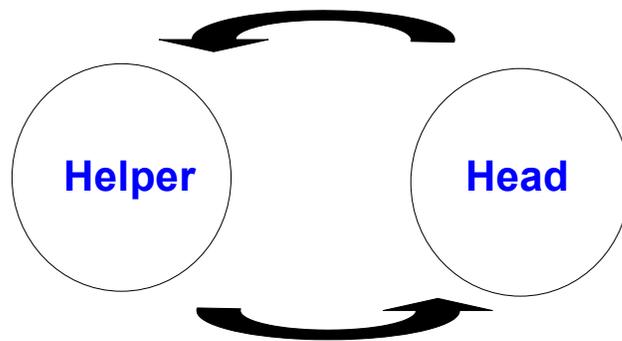
A. Top-Down Traditional Model



B. 50-50 Mythical Model

III. A Biblical View of Marriage

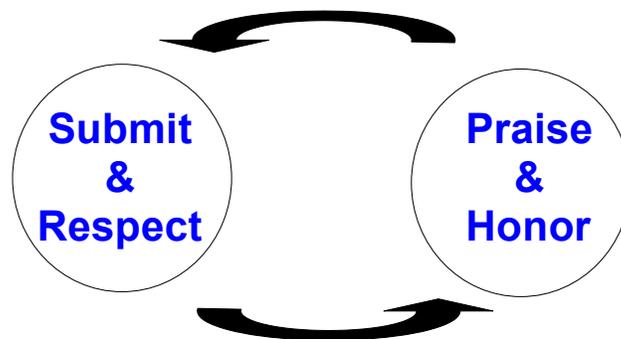
A. Core Roles



The Husband as Head is a servant-leader

The Wife as Helper is a nurturer-completer

B. Core Responses



*We are greatly indebted to Robert Lewis of Fellowship Bible Church Little Rock for the basic ideas and outline in this study.

Discussion Questions:

1. From our Reflection Assignment last week: What are some ways you can begin to accept and live out God's definition of Womanhood?
2. What is the biblical model of leadership or authority, and how is it different from what we typically think?
3. How is the Head-Helper model of marriage different from the traditional Top-Down model?
4. In what way is the Head-Helper model of marriage a "side-by-side" relationship? How is that different than a 50-50 model?
5. When a man responds to his wife with praise and honor, what kind of a woman do you think she becomes?
6. How can giving a man respect actually make him a better leader? How can withholding respect make him a worse leader?

Reflection Assignment:

What is the difference between the cultural and the biblical views of "submission"? How can submission, in a biblical sense, be liberating for you?

Passage to Ponder this week: Ephesians 5:33

Week Sixteen Summary...

Last week we examined a definition of “Woman,” from a biblical perspective:

A REAL Woman is One Who...

- Rejects Wordly Temptations for Significance
- Embraces God’s Design for Relationships
- Nurtures the Next Generations
- Looks for a Greater Reward—God’s Reward

For women who earnestly want to pursue this standard in their own lives, one question springs to mind: What *is* God’s Design for Relationships? It makes sense, of course, that God’s ideal for male/female relationships would entail a relationship between a REAL Woman and a REAL Man. So, let’s add another definition:

A REAL Man is One Who...

- Rejects Passivity
- Accepts Responsibility
- Leads Courageously
- Looks for a Greater Reward—God’s Reward

When we see the words, “Leads Courageously,” most of us think immediately of a traditional “Top-Down” model of leadership. In other words, for “leader” we substitute the word “boss” or “king.” This is an authoritarian, maybe even oppressive, style of leadership in which the “leader” receives benefits at the expense of those he leads. Our natural reaction to this image is a negative one. We would prefer a more “modern” approach to the marriage relationship—a 50-50 Model. Wouldn’t it be better if there was no leader, if everyone shared all responsibility equally? It would be GREAT! If we could just get the men to do their share We call this the Mythical Model, because while it sounds wonderful, a real, live example remains elusive.

What we need to understand is what the Bible means by “leadership.” Jesus taught a model of leadership which is completely at odds with the “Traditional Top-Down” model. According to him, His followers are to lead as He did—sacrificially serving those they lead. Likewise, in the Biblical Head/Helper Model of the marriage relationship, the husband leads by working unselfishly for the benefit of his wife and family. The wife helps by bringing all her strengths to bear as she supports him in that effort. Rather than a Top-Down relationship, it is a Side-by-Side (even symbiotic) relationship. The wife responds to her husband’s servant leadership with submission and respect; the husband responds to his wife’s help with praise and honor. And as God himself said, it is “very good.”