

MAN IN MIRROR BIBLE STUDY  
THE HUSBAND IN THE MIRROR –  
THE BIBLE ON SUBMISSION AND RESPECT

Patrick Morley  
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We are doing a series on marriage, and this morning I'm going to talk to you about submission. Like I've said, we're going to solve all the problems of the world this morning – submission and respect. We're going to look at what the Bible has to say on these subjects. In fact, we're not only going to look at what the Bible has to say, we're also going to look at what the culture has to say, as you can well understand, and find some tensions that need to be resolved. Then I'm going to offer you some suggestions.

No other person can tell you what God's will is for your life on any subject not commanded or prohibited by scripture. Yes? I can't tell you who to marry, where to live, what job to take, or whether or not you should drink and things like this. However, I am going to offer you a few suggestions why I can't tell you they are God's will for your life, I do think they have a lot of merit, and they should be seriously considered. I am going to start by telling you what the Bible has to say, and then we will talk about what that means, and whether or not you think it is true.

I am dedicating this series to my son, John, and my new son-in-law, Jay. No, they're not anywhere here in the building, so when I address John and Jay, they're not here. Some people were looking around last week to see where they were, but they're not here. I was just speaking metaphorically, I suppose. John and Jay I want to do this message in such a way that, if you wanted to, you could sit down with your spouse and listen to it together and try to come to the terms of agreement, if you will, for how to have a thriving marriage. A thriving marriage – that's what I want to talk to you about this morning, the key to a thriving marriage.

I've been working with men for about 30 years, and I would say most men have what I call "get along" marriages. They're getting along. They're not bad marriages, they're good, but they're not great. They are far less than the full potential that you read about in the scriptures for a thriving marriage, and I am going to give you the key, this morning, for how you can have a thriving marriage. Not a "get along" marriage, not a "truce" marriage, but a thriving marriage.

We find this in the scriptures, and I am going to ask you to read along in this passage with me to Ephesians, Chapter 5, then I'm going to give you the addresses of a few other passages that I will read. Let's read beginning at Verse 21. The question is, "What does the Bible say about submission and respect?" Verse 21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of His church." Verse 25, "Husbands love your wives." Verse 33, "However, each of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Then from 1 Peter: Chapter 3, Verse 1, "Wives, in the same way must be submissive to their your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over ...by the behavior of their wives." Verse 7, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life..."

1 Corinthians: Chapter 11, Verse 3, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Verse 11, "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman."

1 Timothy: Chapter 2, Verse 11, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission." 1 Timothy: Chapter 3, Verse 4, "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect." Verse 12 of the same chapter, qualifications of a deacon, "...must be the husband of one wife and must manage his children and his household well."

Titus: Chapter 2, Verses 4 and 5. "Then they can train," speaking about older women, "the younger women to love their husbands and children to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God."

Those are the texts, and the question is, "What are these texts actually saying?" The first thing we see is that these texts assume the husband is to be the head of the household. Recently, Ed Cole died. He was the father of the Christian Men's Movement, great guy. He used to tell a story frequently about a guy who came to one of his Ed Cole meetings, and heard that he was supposed to be the head of his household. He was so excited, he went home and told his wife, "I'm supposed to be the head of this household." Then for 30 minutes he proceeded to repeat to her everything Ed Cole had said to him. Then, he didn't see her for about a week, but at the end of the week, he was able to see a little bit of her just out of his left eye, just able to open his left eye a little bit.

We see in these texts that the husband is to be the head of the woman and also the head of the household. We see in 1 Peter: Chapter 3, Verse 7 that the woman, the wife, is the weaker partner. The man is to be the head of his house, the leader of his home; the woman is the weaker partner. Now, a lot of things happen because these two things are true. Now, whether you believe them or not is a different issue. I'm not asking you to believe them. I'm just asking you to understand what the Bible says. Let's be clear what the Bible says, and then you can decide whether or not you think it is true.

As the head of the home in the scriptures we have read, I'm going to distill them down to the basic concepts, as the head, the husband is to love his wife. That is his principle command. As the weaker partner, the wife's principle command is to submit to her husband. We see that the husband is not independent of his wife, and the wife is not independent of her husband. We see that the husband is to respect, treat his wife with consideration and respect, and we see in Ephesians 5:33 that a woman is to respect her husband. So we see some mutual respect there. The husband is supposed to submit to his wife. It says in Ephesians 5:21, "Let us submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

We also see in the Titus passage that the woman is supposed to love her husband. So we that while the principle command for a man is to love his wife, the woman is also supposed to be taught how to love her husband. The principle command for the wife is to submit to her husband, but, also, we see that in some sense in which a husband is in submission to his wife. Then the final thing is that the husband is supposed to be considerate. That's out of 1 Peter 3:7. Then the wife is to demonstrate quietness. That's the way she would learn. That's what the Bible says.

Now, just let me ask you this question. At this point, is there any doubt, or is there any ambiguity about what the Bible says? Has the Bible been ambiguous about what it's trying to say about these two roles - the role of the husband, and the role of the wife? I would suggest to you that you may not like it. You may not agree with it, you may not even believe it's true, but the one thing that you should not be able to say is, "I think it is ambiguous, I don't think it's clear, I don't think that God has really made his position clear on this."

If you would give me that, I would like to move on from there, and I would like to ask the question, "What does it mean? What does this mean that these are the roles of husband and wife?" What it means, basically, is that there is a divinely willed order to creation. The big idea, John and Jay, and anybody that's interested, is this. The key to a thriving marriage is mutual submission. The key to a thriving marriage is mutual submission. Submission to what? It's submission to the divinely willed order to creation. The key to a thriving marriage is neutral submission to the divine order. What would happen if the moon said to the sun, "I think I'll do this today?" There would be chaos in the cosmos. I like that, chaos in the cosmos.

There is a divine order to creation that has been willed. What if Jesus had said to the Father, "Sorry, no cross for me, Dad!" There is a divine order to creation. God has put all authorities in place that are in place. You have authorities; you have citizens. What if you said to the policeman who pulled you over for speeding, "I'm sorry, Officer, I don't think I'm willing to accept a ticket from you today."

There is a Divine Order to Creation. There is husband, there is wife, there are children, and there are certain structures that are part of the Divine Order of Creation. When everybody submits to their proper role, their proper part, then creation thrives, or marriages thrive, or families thrive. But when anyone rebels against the authority established in the Divine Order, there is chaos, as happened at my home this week.

But it wasn't between my wife and me. Some of you have been here long enough to have heard the stories about the kids cutting through my driveway. There's a complete collapse in culture of respect for authority. My wife calls it "pay back" because throughout our entire life, whether up in North Carolina or out in the country, I'm always drawn to go down the driveways of the places that say, "Private Drive." This is all "pay back" according to my wife.

Two days ago, I was walking out to get the newspaper, and it was poetic. At the same distance from my newspaper, on the other side, coming toward me was a guy in a red jeep. What do they call those, CJ's, the ones that don't have any tops? A guy in a red jeep coming up my driveway, and at the same speed I was walking, he was driving, and we were equidistant from the newspaper so we met at the newspaper. He looked sort of sheepish and he said, "I guess I'm busted, huh?" I say, "Yeh, you're busted. What are you doing?" He said, "Well, I live over here, and we just bought a second house over here, and I'm fixing it up, and I just thought I would cut through here to get over there." I said, "You do realize this is private drive, right?" He said, "Actually, I didn't know for sure because there is no sign out front that says, 'Private Drive.'" I said, "Come on, give me a break here." Then he got defensive. "Hey, if you don't want me to do this, just tell me, and I'll back up." I said, "No, no, no, hold on, hold on just a second. It's not that easy. This is a concrete driveway, yes?" "Yes," "There are shrubs all around, right, that give it a very residential look. Do you see how that the front of that house is no more 15 feet from this driveway? Does this not give the general impression that this is a private drive?" He finally realized that wasn't going to work so he stipulated that it was a private driveway. He said, "But sir, if you want me to back up, just tell me, and I will." Now he's getting huffy with me. I had not gotten really huffy with him yet. I said I was very kindly, and I'm saying it to you, I was kind to him when I was saying it. Then I told him the story about the kids and the "cut through" house. I said, "You know, we just basically had a complaint because you know why? Because we through this generation of kids, and if you or I would have a little respect for authority, they probably would to." So I told him to go ahead and pull on through, but, in the future, give me a break here, okay? You know, the only people who would sue you are the people do that kind of thing in the first place. Someone who would respect you would never be the kind of person who would sue you if they fell down or what ever.

The big idea here this morning is that the key to a thriving marriage is mutual submission. Submission to what? Submission to the authority structure. God is ordained before creation. That's the deal.

Now, the question is, "Is it true? Why is it so controversial? What does the culture tell us? What does culture tell us today?" Well, as Dr. Dobson points out in his wonderful book *Bringing Up Boys*, that in the 1960's, there was not much confusion about roles about men and women in marriage, nor the roles of children. Of course, he's talking about bringing up boys. He points out that the radical feminism movement, which began in the 1970's, is sort of the constructed culture the way we know it, and there is a great deal of pressure for men to be more like women, and for women to be more like men. There is a great deal of role confusion. The first generation, we're just confused. But, guess what? The next generation, they don't find this confusing. They think there's one sex or close to it.

So, what's the problem? The problem is in these ideas and culture, ideas are more powerful than labor. Ideas that force emotion that once released can no longer be contained. When the ideas get out into culture that men need to be more like women, and women need to be more like men, things happen. Those are ideas that are powerful, and they take on lives of their own, and they create energy of their own. So, you see a tremendous shift in culture since the late 1960's. I confess it's my generation that did this. We're the ones that started the cultural revolution. I love it when the young people say, "Oh, you wouldn't understand." Didn't understand what? We made all this. We did all this. What is it you think we wouldn't understand? We caused all this to happen.

The results of this have been astonishing. In 1890, 15% of women were in the work force. As Peter Drucker says, "One of the greatest achievements of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was to get women out of the work force so they could be at home nurturing their families and children." What a great accomplishment of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. So by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, only 15% of women were in the work force. Then, Drucker says this, I am quoting from Gilder's book, *Men and Marriage*, Drucker says this. "We are busily unmaking one of the proudest social achievements of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century which was to take married women out of the work force so they could devote themselves to family and children."

You want to be in submission to God's Divine Order of Creation? Be a leader. Protect your family. Provide for your family. Take charge of your life style. You think that some women enjoy working, and that's great, but all of the studies coming out now from groups like *The Harvard Bulletin*, and one of the big things that's going on with women who were Harvard graduates is that now they're reconsidering. You see many articles that say that maybe the idea of having this exciting career wasn't such a good idea after all, and a lot of women really want to reconsider. But, the problem is that the husband has allowed a financial structure to be developed so that these women have to work. It's so complicated, but the culture, itself, has created lifestyle expectations, and such, it is structurally now wired for women to work. I'm not saying we can change that, I'm not even saying it's a bad thing, I'm just telling you what the results are as studies show men to be like women, and women to be like men.

One of the results is that you have now have gone to 60% of all women working. By the way, I think, and don't hold me to this exactly, but about 50% of all women with children under the age of six are working. These ideas have ramifications later. Some of you come from broken homes. Why? Because when the wife has to work and can't pay attention to the kids, the kids go wild, the wife is stressed, so we have more divorces. Why do we have more divorces? Look, we need to have some people out here that can debate and discredit all the arguments. Just look at the facts, and draw wise conclusions. If 50% of women are working, it's going to create more problems than if 15% of those women are working. This could be a little controversial what I'm saying.

Another result is that you end up with two quarterbacks on the team. What would happen if two quarterbacks on the team both tried to call a play? You've been on a committee before where you had two people who tried to run the committee. What do they call these things? They call them power struggles. When you have two people trying to run a marriage, who are not in mutual submission to God's Creation of Order, then you're going to have power struggles in the marriage. When you tell women to be like men and men to be like women, they're going to try and what's going to happen? You're going to have a power struggle.

The big idea this morning is that the key to a thriving marriage is mutual submission. To what – God's Creation of Order. Husbands listen, know this, I wish your wives were listening, too, so they could know this.

Now long after we got married, Patsy, my sweet wife, started coming up with all these things like, "You can't tell me what to do, and I need to be who I am, and I need to reach my full potential," and this kind of thing. So I finally said, "What are you talking about? Where is all this coming from? This isn't the way you were talking six months or a year ago. What's going on here?" She said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "You're different; your ideas are different." We basically sat down and talked it through, and we realized that she was subscribing to all of the women's secular magazines that were filling her head full of these ideas about men being like women and women being like men. So this whole positive, assertive training mentality was what she was picking up. She was not in submission to God's Creation of Order, and it was creating chaos in our marriage. We got it straightened out, and we have a thriving marriage, and there have been other times when I've done things that have not been respectful, or loving, and so forth, and I've thrown the marriage into chaos. But we've been able to sort it out because the key to a thriving marriage is what? Mutual submission to what – God's Creation of Order. God has a divinely ordered will for creation. It's very clear, at least His idea about it is very clear. Ours seems to be a bit muddled sometimes.

One of the things I try to do around here; in fact, I have a little one-page worksheet. I use it every week when I put the talk together. Way up near the top, one of the things I have written on this worksheet is that my desire is that you would revere God and God's word. That's one of my dreams. I'm a Bible teacher, for crying out loud. I'm not a culture teacher. I'm a Bible teacher. The problem here is that my desire is that you would revere God's word and change culture. But because the culture and the Bible are so different, there's a lot of pressure to revere the culture and change God's word. We're not going to do that here. I'm not going to ever do that here. So, if it's controversial, so what! I don't care. I don't get paid any money to teach this Bible Study anyway. You can't fire me. You can stop coming, but you can't fire me.

We want to revere God's word and use that to change the culture. The problem is that when culture and the Bible seem to be going along parallel strains, it's easy to be a Christian, isn't it? But when the culture is going one way, and the Bible is going another, there is a great deal of pressure on the church to try to figure out how to live peaceably and make compromises and to look for loopholes. That's why you have well-meaning people coming up with all sorts of lame explanations of what this really means, what God really meant here. What God really meant here was the Divine Order of Creation and if everybody does their part in mutual submission, respecting the authority structures that He's built into creation, there is a thriving creation, and a thriving marriage. When there's not, then there's not.

A couple of suggestions for you. First, if you can, and not everybody can, hey, think about making your wife into a stay-at-home Mom. If you have little kids, if you don't have little kids, that's a different story, but if you have little kids, try to figure out how you can let you wife be a stay-at-home Mom. Be a leader, take charge, make it happen, then make decisions! You're the head of the household. Make some decisions. Do it like any good leader would do. Get input, get feedback. Make the decisions, be a leader in your house. Don't be a dictator, be participative, but be the head of the household. Stop trying to be like a woman. Stop trying to be the weaker partner. Be the stronger partner. That's what you are. The Bible says that, everybody knows it, and in culture nobody wants to admit it. There's a tremendous effort to pretend that women are as strong as men. They're not. I'm sorry. Are some women stronger than men? Yes. Does the exception create the rule? No. The exception does not create the rule. The exception is put in place, and we understand that nothing is 100%.

Another idea. Be home for dinner. Get home for dinner. Tell your kids to get home for dinner. If your kids have games, then get a box of Burger King and go and eat at or before the game. But be home for dinner. All research shows that family values are transmitted over the dinner table, a dinner table that very few people actually go to anymore. Be a leader. Take charge.

Final idea. I was listening to a man who wanted to give a testimony, so he asked his wife, "Who's #1 in my life?" She said, "Work." He said, "What?" She said, "Work is #1 in your life." "No baby, no baby, you're #1 in my life." "I am not #1 in your life, who do you think you're kidding here?"

The big idea for the whole series is what? After God but before others, what? I will make my wife my top priority. Yes? That's the overarching idea for the whole thing. Make her #1! Stop making work #1. You're violating God's Creation of Order. You are not acting out as the head of your house. The greatest, most profound, relationship in God's Creation of Order is husband and wife. This is the key to a thriving marriage – mutual submission.

Let's pray:

Father, thank you for your word for what it says, for what it means, and, Lord, for the possibility that it can literally revolutionize our lives when we stop pretending that it says something other than what it really says. Just taking it at face value. So, God, I pray for the marriages of these men. I pray that you give them thriving marriages. I pray, Lord, that you would get rid of the "get along" marriage, and you break all the truces, that you would help these men pay the price to have a biblical marriage and a thriving marriage. I ask this in Your name, Jesus. Amen

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