

MALE AND FEMALE RENEWED IN CHRIST

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Due to the effects of the Adamic Fall, the whole person, including gender roles, needs to be renewed in Christ (Col 3:10). What may feel —right| or —O.K.|| is often a compromise of God's ideal for men and women. Our gender differences and sexuality are derived from God. Born again men and women submit to the headship of Christ by submitting to His Word. In Christ, gender roles are —renewed| because the Holy Spirit gives the power, inclination and understanding to follow the standard set by Scripture. God gives the power to follow a different standard than the one set by the world and the flesh. (The godly man and godly woman seek to occupy and promote the God-glorifying vision for scriptural manhood and womanhood.)

We need to understand our 'gender-specific wounds' as a result of our first parents' fall into sin. In Genesis chapter three, God pronounces a curse upon the entire creation as a result of human sin. The application of the curse was a judicial action of God. Someday the curse will be removed when Christ returns. The curse has _gender specific' judgments (or _wounds') applied to Adam and Eve and their descendents. These gender specific wounds powerfully shape the _battle of the sexes'.

Man has been wounded in his adequacy, strength, masculinity and leadership. Due to original sin, he has inherited a _broken scepter from Adam. Woman has been wounded in her femininity—she feels her insecurity deeply and has added pains in childbearing. Both genders have carnal ways of attempting to compensate for their gender-specific wounds. Historically sinful man has resorted to violence, materialism, and oppression in an attempt to overcome his weakened state. And historically women have carnally turned to manipulation, contentiousness, and sensuality to compensate for fears born of insecurity and unlovability.

In Genesis chapter three, God predicts the inevitability of marital conflict: the woman will seek to minister to her love and security fears through manipulation. And the husband will put down conflict by domination and the exercise of superior strength. This certainly is the story of the human race. God's forecast is NOT the divine plan for redeemed marriage. God's better plan is the redemption of sinners through Christ, AND, the redemption of their marital relationships. We are calling this gracious plan of God for Christian marriage: —Male and Female renewed in Christ.||

The Redemptive Analogy of Ephesians 5:22-23 Provides a Framework for Gender Character Goals. Christ's love for the Church is a model of male initiation of love. He seeks, saves, pursues, and wins His bride by love. Though He is Lord, King, Leader and Initiator, He sets aside His privileges so that He may *give* Himself for her. He sets aside personal immediate rights in order to meet the needs of another. The redemptive ideal is seen in the repeated prepositions specific to each gender:

He is *for* the bride. He gives Himself *for* her. He is responsible *for* her.

She is responding *to* Him. She is responsible *to* Him. She submits *to* Him. She grants respect *to* Him. He dies to self by sacrificing *Himself for* her (that is the cross of Christ applied).

She dies by sacrificing her *will for* Him (the cross of Christ applied).

Thus, Ephesians 5 provides CHARACTER goals for male and female (virtue for the woman, godly service for the man, her goal is godliness, she excels in servanthood – see Prov. 31; 1 Pet. 3; 1 Tim. 2, 5; Titus 2). (Note the book: *Love and Respect*.)

Ephesians 5 PATTERN emerges even in the courtship. (The man wins by love. He is the risk-taker, the initiator, the protector, the spiritual provider.) The redemptive analogy provides the PRIORITIES for marriage that will begin to be manifested in the dating and courtship phase (see the section above on the roles depicted in “*for*” and “*to*.” Even during courtship and dating, the “*redeemable*”

woman will manifest an ability to go in the direction of being —to the man.) The redemptive analogy sets forth an EXAMPLE to the watching world. Biblical manhood and womanhood glorifies God. It honors the Word of God—says that ‘God is wonderful’ (Titus 2:3-5; John 17:23).

Study the Emotional Differences between Men and Women; it Furthers Communication and Understanding (your own needs are not the reference point for your partner’s needs).

QUESTION – What do men value? The rights of others. They value respect, strength, honor, achievement, integrity, ability, brotherhood, heroes, absolutes, space, code of honor, forthrightness.

QUESTION – What do women value? Women value care, empathy, praise, appreciation, tenderness, acceptance, understanding, attention, kindness, nurture, respect, honor, protection.

Application – In order to edify the opposite sex, these virtues need to be taken into consideration. As men, we cannot look at ourselves in order to determine what Christian sisters need from us. We have to relate to them as fully woman, not as —sub-males competing in a man’s world.

The man’s energy center is his sense of competence and achievement. (EX. die on hill of principle)

Men operate from this position of inner confidence that is expressed in taking action. From this position, they accept a challenge. They are able to respond with, —I can do it with Christ’s help, —Let’s move out and go for it. —I do believe I am the guy for the job. Often women don’t understand this. They tend to see confidence in one’s competence as pride, arrogance and useless —chest-puffing. The truth is that the deflated man won’t accomplish much. He’s got to get his —p.s.i. back up! Women need to learn to handle the man’s confidence center with care, it truly is sacred. A beat down man without confidence will find it extremely difficult to excel in any form of leadership. God is deadly serious when He commands the woman to respect the man. Women want their feelings handled with the utmost care, but often run roughshod over a man’s ego center with no regard for its sacredness. The answer to that problem is found in the obedience commanded in Ephesians 4:29. Determine to major in edification and encouragement. It costs nothing and leaves a blessing behind.

The woman’s energy center is the blender of emotion. (EX. laugh, cry together)

This is the main reason that women are considered illogical. They tend to evaluate life slightly different than men. Men tend to be more cerebral, they lead with the head. Men more often see truths and issues in black and white (which fits their God ordained role of providing spiritual and moral leadership). Women run experiences through the blender of emotions and draw conclusions as a result. With that —blender they ask, —How does this feel? —How will this affect each person I know? They depend heavily upon intuition and emotional discernment. They often come to the same conclusion as man, but arrive there by a different path. Women have great powers of empathy, compassion and nurture (these are the perfect equipment for their role as wife and mother). The key word for women is ‘connection’. While men find emotions to be a nuisance or an embarrassment at times, women tend to be more comfortable with emotions. They can try on different ones on at will like clothing. It is difficult for a man to understand the phenomenon of a mother and daughter having a good —cry together. (Men bond together by service in the same organization, by recreation, by discourse in the world of ideas. Women bond more by entering into the emotions of others.) For women, emotions are the energy center, the sacred area. In courtship a woman will sooner or later ask herself, —Is my heart safe with that man, is that man interested in knowing my heart? —How will he care for my heart? Will it be with love, affirmation, and empathy OR, merely spouted platitudes?

The Universal Fears of Men and Women

This is a very important consideration. Men and women spend a great deal of mental and emotional energy defending themselves from these fears. Often elaborate defenses are erected in order to ensure self-protection.

A man's universal fears are: the exposure of his inadequacy, and being subjugated by a woman. He fears being weighed in the scales and found wanting. He fears that he will be inadequate in some or all of his roles and responsibilities. Unless he is filled with the Spirit, the greatness of his fear will determine the size and sophistication of his defense mechanisms. Don't discount the fact that men have an inner cry for adequacy. When God takes control of a man's life, that man's —scorecard is never the same. The things he looked to in the past for adequacy no longer rule his life. False sources of adequacy include boasting, aggression, comparisons, wealth, materialism, popularity, influence, and sensuality. Divine sources of adequacy flow from dependency upon the Lord. God is the Author of a man's talents (Ps. 139:15-16; James 1:17; Ps. 100:3). A man is to place his confidence in the Lord (2 Cor. 3:4-6), and boast in the Lord (Jer. 17:5-8).

A woman's universal fears center upon the fear of being an object that is used and or abused. They fear being used as a sex object. They fear being treated as a possession that is cared for and then abandoned either emotionally, physically or both. They fear being relegated to the position of a housemaid or a servant or a chattel. Women often feel like they have to —have it all together. Fleshly mechanisms offer them the —ability to be in charge of their own needs and vulnerabilities. For a woman, looking out for number one often involves getting others to do their bidding (exchanging nurture for the meeting of her needs). False sources of security for a woman involve controlling others, being in charge of self-protection, knowing what's going on at all times and concealing personal weakness. (When a woman controls her security agenda with an iron fist, she is revealing that she is too weak to trust. By her imbalance in the direction of diamond traits, she reveals a secret heart that is fearful of trusting.) Scripture says that the woman IS the weaker vessel (1 Pet. 3:7). The more she tries to conceal that fact, the less gracious she will be. God delights in a *meek and quiet spirit* (1 Pet. 3:4). **Part of the beauty of femininity is female vulnerability placed in the hands of God. This is the opposite of the woman who is in charge of her needs, her security, her reception of love and her vulnerabilities.** (Note how this is perverted by a culture that gives a woman permission to use her sensuality/sexuality for personal power.) When a woman seeks to be the chief evaluator of her man, she will erode her femininity in the process. The woman with the peaceful spirit is able to receive guidance, she is able to trust, she is dependent upon the Lord and therefore able to respond and care for others. She is delivered from the fear of man; she is comfortable with the full spectrum of her womanhood. She acknowledges God as her Defender. She takes her fears to Him moment by moment. Nothing touches a married man's heart more than the character quality of a wife who responds in trust, acknowledging God's wise hand upon her husband.

Men and Women Ought to Have a Reverence for the Fears and Energy Center of the Other.

Many couples —fight unfairly by *shooting* at the sacred areas or fears of the other. Shooting at these areas (gender specific wounds) brings maximum hurt. Some people stoop to this behavior in order to manipulate the other person. It dishonors the Lord because it sows distrust and opens the door to resentment. The wise and gracious man or woman KNOWS how to bring encouragement to another and how to safeguard the other person's vulnerability. In a godly marriage, conflict resolution will ultimately be edifying. The partners will be extremely zealous NOT to take shots at their partner's gender-specific wounds!!! It is difficult to give and receive genuine edification if one is in the full-time business of self-protection and self-vindication. The warning is: *if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another* (Gal 5:15). The challenge is to grow past self-protection by greater dependency upon the Lord and by expectation that He desires to prosper our fellowship. (Intimacy in a marriage is like a helpless infant—it has no viability of its own—it needs constant care and nurture in order to be sustained.)

In the Redemptive Relationship, the Fulfilled Christian Man Leads in Love

- 1.) ***He is renewed in Christ.*** He knows who he is in Christ, he is realistic about both his strengths and his weaknesses (Rom. 12:3). He reckons his identity in Christ, knowing that he is accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). He understands that his maleness is from God. He knows that his manhood is rooted in God and that God is for his manhood (that it is good and honoring to God to exercise his manhood). He views his Savior as the —Architect, Blueprint and Contractor —of the new man (Eph. 4:16; Col. 3:9-10).
- 2.) ***He proceeds and moves ahead.*** Instead of waiting to see what comes to him, moves forward. He loves a challenge. He desires to be productive to the glory of God. He seeks a place of spiritual influence. He gives content to the phrase, —I love you by taking responsibility. He initiates. As he matures, he increasingly knows what he wants because God is forming in him the desires of his heart (Ps. 37:4). He doesn't just wait for something to happen. He acts upon the goals, objectives and ideas that flow from his vision and mission. He dies to exploitation and manipulation. He treats the woman as a child of God who is God's property (mediated through Christ).
- 3.) ***He provides.*** He cultivates her trust by being trustworthy (i.e., trust grows as he manifests self-control and self-discipline. He controls his needs and is free to meet hers). He is able to admonish and confront in love. He is able to establish boundaries in the relationship. He provides understanding in the relationship. He is patient with her weaknesses. He lets her be a woman, he doesn't insist she act like a man – he practices an understanding spirit toward her (1 Pet. 3). He thinks ahead, considering how he will provide for her material, emotional and spiritual needs. A woman's deep desire for security is fulfilled when her emotional needs are met by her husband. The man exercises spiritual leadership. He —mediates grace to her. The man brings his emotional dependence to God so that the woman can lean on him and go to pieces on him if needed.
- 4.) ***He protects her.*** As her best friend, he defends her honor. He defends her, keeping an eye out for potential danger and dishonor. He corrects himself – he can frequently trace a problem back to a lapse in his own godly manhood. He may have to identify the problem in his own prayer closet – perhaps he was seeking to please the woman ahead of God. He also protects her from himself. He knows that he is in the easiest position to hurt her. He protects her from his own anger, bitterness, rashness and petulance. He dies to giving free vent to his negative feelings.
- 5.) ***He promotes her.*** He gives her glory, honor, praise and encouragement. He brings oneness to the relationship by his sacrificial love. As the marriage nears, he increasingly esteems the truth that they will be part of one another. All he is, she is. All she has, he has. Therefore, there is no need to compete. They will view their gifts and abilities as a —pooling of resources. He guards the relationship zealously as if it is a third party that deserves care, nurture, respect and every consideration. He knows that it is the hero that is married to a fulfilled woman (it is the mediocre man who is married to the unfulfilled woman).

The Fulfilled Christian Woman

- 1.) ***She knows who she is in Christ.*** She knows that her femininity is rooted in God. She knows that her femininity is essential and important to God and man. She gives her compassion, strength, grace, empathy and vulnerability to the Spirit's control. She knows that Christ carries her value. She is loved by God and able to risk again. She is completely loved by One who completely knows her. The godly husband teaches grace truths to his wife because grace truths are the basis for trusting God (and the husband).

- 2.) ***She responds to the Lord's love and purpose for her.*** She is able to choose submission from the heart to Christ, to those in authority over her and to her right man. She knows that her needs are met through submission. It is her pathway to honor, freedom and glory. (Heart vulnerability is related to submission. Without submission, transparency will be stifled.) She sees submission as the heart of the relationship with her man. She sees submission as the expression of love to her husband. ***She knows that a submissive heart ends the war and puts the conflict to rest. She doesn't content with him or challenge him, he is free to lead.*** Her path to power is by submission, she asks, —How can I help this man succeed? She views submission as the method of having her needs met. Because she has married a man who walks closely with God, he is able to make her glorious. He is committed to her need of security, to her need of affection and to her need of glory. The man is *for her* 100%. The man is generous in giving to her in these areas – it costs him so little, and it is fun and easy to provide for these needs. The deepest yearning of the woman is to give herself totally and without reservation to a man who will not use her, but love her. When married to a truly godly man—her surrender is rational (Rom 12:1-2).
- 3.) ***She respects her man.*** She trusts him, even when she cannot see the full wisdom of his decisions. Her trust is an act of love to him. She trusts even when things are not going well and she doesn't understand. She gives feedback on her needs especially, but also offers creative solutions. She knows that there is a right time to provide feedback. She is able to demonstrate wisdom by waiting (she avoids any temptation to suggest that she knows best and avoids saying, —I told you so!). ***She finds her solution in him, not in manipulating him. She trusts that he is led by the Lord.*** She allows him to correct himself—giving him room to do so. (Good men make mistakes because they are moving ahead, making decisions, and taking risks.) She admires his efforts and doesn't cut him down for his failures. She gives him room to fail and correct his course.
- 4.) ***She reproduces glory (1 Cor 11:7).*** This is the redemptive principle in relational fruition. She reproduces the glory she receives from him in her children, in her friendships and in her ministries. ***She yields to oneness and glory. She is comfortable in her role and is able to receive from her husband. She nurtures the seed of her husband's potential. She followed him, because she believed in him.*** Now she challenges him even higher. She envisions him as the success that he is becoming. She nurtures, encourages and releases power in him. She shares his station in life, thus she enthusiastically cheers her man's accomplishments. She is one with him. She knows that the answer to a woman's need is the exercise of godly manhood.

Make your Wife Glorious: Know the Marital Commands of Ephesians 5

The redemptive ideal in marriage is drawn from Christ's redemptive love for His Bride, the Church. The manner in which Christian marriages typify Christ's relationship with His church is multi-faceted and complex. Paul describes it as a *mystery* (Eph. 5:32). It is a mystery not easily exhausted. A godly marriage will fully embrace this divine ideal/plan to *image* redemption.

Consider the depth of this mystery. Our Creator became a man in order to redeem a portion of sinful mankind that this portion might become His eternal Bride. The Lord is forever joined to our nature. He has taken on a body of dust that He might be glorified in that body and thereby glorify His human Bride. Divine nature is forever *—wed—* to human nature in the Person of Christ that redeemed humans might forever be united to God and glorified in their Head – how deep is this mystery!

The greatest wedding in the cosmos is yet future. All the elect before us prepared for it. Heaven itself is defined by this cosmic union yet to come. Redeemed individuals shall be seated above angels in glory as God's eternal companions and as Christ's beloved bride. The great *marriage supper*

of the Lamb will inaugurate the consummation of God's purposes in salvation (Rev. 19:7-9). We shall be raised to the honor and glory of Christ's estate by virtue of our union with Him (2 Thess 2:14).

On that day, all of the bride's distressing corruptions will fall to the ground in an instant. She will be clothed in white and will be without spot or wrinkle. God the Father will present her clothed in splendor and glory, spotless, made ready for her husband. She will be given to the Son of God in a cosmic wedding ceremony to be witnessed by the holy rational universe.

Christian marriage is God's chief object lesson on earth of redemption. God's great undertaking to redeem a portion of humanity and make them fit to wed His Son encompasses a plan that precedes time. In eternity past God planned our redemption in His eternal counsels; a covenant within the Godhead known as *the covenant of redemption*. The names of the elect were written into this covenant. In effect, the Father *chose* a Bride for His Son.

There is no higher earthly picture of the redemptive relationship between the Lord and the believer than marriage. Marriages characterized by sacrificial love and whole-hearted submission glorify God BECAUSE they reflect the perfection of love in future glory between the Lord and the saints. Thus a Spirit-filled marriage relationship that fulfills the redemptive ideals and commands of Ephesians chapter 5 presents a powerful object lesson to the watching world.

The perfect model and pattern for earthly marital union is the *oneness* inherent in the Christ-church relationship (this oneness was first set forth in the wedding of Adam and Eve – *bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh* – Gen 2:23). The power and impact of a redemptive marriage relationship is contained in its ability to communicate the mystery of Christ and His Church (God is wonderful).

Only the Spirit-filled, Spirit-enabled believer can fulfill the marital commands of Ephesians chapter 5. Couples devoted to Christ and His glory embrace the vision to reflect Christ's relationship with His church. It is their purpose by obeying Christ in their marriage relationships to attest to the invisible supernatural reality of Christ and His Church.

In our culture, marriage is all too often trivialized into a mere social contract that exists only for the convenience and felt needs of the individual. As our nation is increasingly *secularized*, apart from a revival, we can expect that the institution of marriage will be increasingly stripped of meaning; no longer viewed as a divine institution and covenant and no longer a communicator of the mystery of redemption (reduced to the pragmatics, —does this meet my needs?). Scripture establishes the highest purpose for marriage to be above our own desire for fulfillment. That lofty purpose entails an opportunity to bear fruit for God in the reverence of Christ (Rom 7:4).

In order for marriages to be spiritually fruitful, they must glorify God. Obedience to the commands of Ephesians 5 is the divinely appointed means by which the partners in holy matrimony glorify God in the marriage relationship; they glorify the Lord by showing forth the mystery of Christ and the church.

When the biblical roles are occupied in the power of the Spirit, God is exalted in the redemptive ideal. This obedience to the marital commands bears fruit for God. God's glory is a loftier goal than our own happiness. Seeking to bear fruit for God will not prevent our happiness, but will achieve it in the manner appointed by God's Word. Christ's Bride is made glorious by Christ's redemption and sanctification of her. Her part is to submit to Him in order to be made glorious. God's way is *glory through submission*.

Jesus Christ is the perfect demonstration of glory through submission. He was the perfect disciple, the perfect believer, the perfect Son. He exhibited no will to power; He always sought first

the kingdom of God (Phil 2:5-11). He did not love His own life unto death, but became obedient unto death. The Father's will was His meat and drink (Jn 4:34). He submitted perfectly to Him who judges righteously. He did not love all that was in this world, but overcame the world. He lost His life for the sake of the gospel; He laid down His life for the sake of His Bride. This loving submission among equals is a marvelous pattern; for it is inherent in the Godhead (self-giving). A division of labor; a hierarchy of authority and honor among equals; this is the model for marriage. The universe is built upon this truth of unity, equality, and diversity within the Godhead! (A corpse in a stone tomb).

Christ is worthy therefore to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing (Rev 5:12). God highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him a name above every name (Phil 2:9). Christ perfectly exemplifies the *kingdom way* of gloriousness; the way of submission.

The church is powerless to make herself glorious; she is to submit to Christ, this is how she is to be made glorious. The more she lives self-willed and sumptuously, and the more she enriches and embellishes herself, the more she will resemble the world and be degraded in the process (Rev 3:17,18). Apostate Rome has tried to make herself glorious with gold and purple and pomp – but her wealth and fame will turn to consuming fire on the last day; her *abundance* will consume her flesh (James 5:1-3ff). (EX. A spending spree at a mall might make a woman more attractive; but it cannot make her glorious. Why, glory comes from submission to someone great who holds you in His heart of love. Glory is the byproduct of being in submission to the one who loves us.)

The devil's lie has always been about self-glorification. The world offers this narcissistic approach to importance. But it is utterly impotent. The path to glory is modeled by the relations within the Holy Trinity. Glory only comes as a byproduct of submission to the Glorious One. (If this is true of our sinless Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; how much more for the sinful creature? This is why a self-directed life cannot produce glory.)

This is why in heaven's eyes submission is a love word; for submission is surrender to love. It is devotion to the One who holds you in His heart. Christ's love to the Father is seen in His submission. Christ's obedience that led Him to Calvary declares both His love for the Father and the church. The Savior's heart is fixed upon the joy He will forever experience with His glorified bride—the joy set before Him (Heb. 12:2). Thus, *when sacrificial love is joined to submission, glory follows.* Christ sets the pattern. He loves sacrificially; He redeems; He sanctifies; He glorifies His church. Ephesians 5 elucidates these eternal truths and applies them to marriage in the form of principles.

When drawing from the well of redemptive truth in these verses (Eph 5:22-33), precept must stay joined to mystery if the full benefit is to be derived. Husbands and wives who *feed* upon the redemptive truths of Christ and the Church will find no lack of motivation to fulfill the *gender-specific* commands of Ephesians 5. Just as the Church's submission to Christ is the *means* of her perfecting, the wife's submission to her husband is central to her sanctification as a married believer. So also, the husband is given *gender-specific* commands by the Lord (sacrificial love for his wife). He must commit himself to the obedience of commands in order for his sanctification to continue unhindered. (Plus these commands in Ephesians 5 answer our gender-specific wounds—*healing us* by the gospel and allowing the one we love most on earth to be the agent of Christ's love to us—and in so doing our masculinity and femininity are deepened to the glory of God.)

As true disciples of Christ, both husband and wife are commanded to die to self (Matt. 16:24). In the marriage relationship, the husband dies to self by *sacrificing himself for his wife* (as Christ did for the church) and she dies to self by *sacrificing her will* in obedience to him (as the church does in obedience to Christ). As these roles are occupied, Christ's love is magnified by the lives of the

spouses. In addition, when these respective roles are occupied, there is a deepening and a maturing of godly masculinity and femininity in the husband and the wife.

The man's spiritual headship is not to be regarded merely as male privilege; it is to be understood as the man's appointment and equipping by God to make his wife glorious. He serves her by occupying his headship instead of relinquishing it. His headship is for the edification and protection of his whole family; he occupies the place of spiritual authority *for the sake of* others (Deut. 6:6-7). Husbands are to fulfill their headship toward their wives by *loving them sacrificially*. Husbands are placed in a role of spiritual leadership in order to make their wives glorious – he *lays down his life for her; he washes her by the Word*. The man who treasures his God-given role as *redeemer* in the marriage will enthusiastically occupy his position of spiritual headship. In a Christian marriage, the pursuit of the redemptive ideal is necessarily joined to progressive sanctification; for marriage is by God's design both a **crucible and a classroom** for progress in godliness (why?):

Obedience to gender specific commands of Ephesians 5 is part and parcel of progressive sanctification. The godly husband who is intent upon modeling the principles of Ephesians 5 will be careful not to relinquish or abuse his headship. He rightly reasons that as God's man he is a tool in God's hands for his wife's sanctification; he must do nothing less than contribute to his wife's preparation for heaven. As such the husband is a type of Christ. He must not break the type by harboring unforgiveness, or by dealing with his wife harshly, or by operating out of selfishness.

Christ's sacrificial love for His church had the goal in mind of her sanctification and purity. Christ's purifying love teaches us that love pursues purity in its object. Love wants only the highest good for the one it loves. The Christian husband who understands his redemptive role will see his wife's greatest earthly need as the exercise of his godly manhood on her behalf. (Comprehending the height of this headship calling will assist in *liberating* Christian marriage from the false charges of chauvinism.) In that same vein it needs to be stressed that the wife's submission is not a mindless or passive carrying out of another's wishes. The wife provides creative dynamic feedback. She offers wit and counsel to her husband as an ideal helpmate.

When couples fulfill the marital commands of Ephesians 5, they reach the highest possible potential of harmony, intimacy, and fulfillment. The fulfilled woman of Ephesians 5 is one who is cherished, who is nourished, who is provided for, and who is loved sacrificially. **By fully identifying with her husband's purposes, a wife sets her husband free to make her glorious.** The wife as well as the husband must see the marriage through the lens of the redemptive analogy. When obeyed, the commands of Ephesians 5 put an end to challenging, resisting and contesting.

The attitudes and actions of Ephesians 5 are directed at our mates, but they are ultimately God-ward in direction. We please Christ first in order to please our mate. The key to effectiveness in modeling the redemptive ideal is submission to Christ first. If our desire to please our mate is not grounded in our desire to reverence and please Christ, we will tend to settle for a lower standard of obedience that will be more sporadic. The highest motivation to obey these commands (so as to deny self) is to be drawn from Christ's love and from a desire to please Him above all others in loyalty.

When we seek to please Christ first, it will protect us from our own sin natures and the sin nature of our mate. If our motivation to love and submit comes from no higher incentive than our mate's approval, we will find that we are not obeying to the glory of God. The temptation will be too great to make our spouse the primary evaluator of our behavior. (This is fraught with unique problems; especially if the male lives for the approval of his wife rather than the approval of Christ.)

Our submission to Christ is the source of our spiritual strength. We honor Christ and we enjoy fellowship with Him when we live to please Him by obedience to the marital commands. In this way the fulfillment of the roles mandated in Ephesians 5 becomes pivotal to our sanctification. The *gender specific* commands take on a significance that goes all the way back to the curse. Through the indwelling of Christ's Spirit believers are able to rise above the natural tendencies of male domination and female manipulation (see the effects of the curse in Genesis 3; especially 3:16 in which male domination and female manipulation are set forth as inevitable in a fallen world. The commands of Ephesians 5 have the potential to take the marriage relationship to a spiritual height that rises above the *natural* relational tension described in the Curse—thus enabling it to image redemption):

Redemption in Christ is intended to overcome the effects of the fall in marital relations. In rising above these tendencies inherent in our natures – Christian couples are able to model the mystery of Christ and the Church. God is glorified when the redemptive ideal is lived out in Christian marriages. Husbands and wives are progressively sanctified in the process of living out the redemptive ideal. The precepts that govern the behavior of spouses toward each other must stay joined to the doctrine of the atonement; the *mystery of redemption* and *union with Christ* is intended to animate our willingness to pursue the redemptive ideal (it takes the cross applied to be able to do this. There must be co-crucifixion with Christ applied and reckoned in order to die to *self-protection; self-promotion; and self-vindication*).

Redemption through Christ is the foundation for these precepts and the source of their power. Christian marriages need greater attention to the atonement in order to realize the redemptive ideal in their lives. God has joined His own glory to our highest good in allowing Christian marriages to show forth the wonderful mystery of Christ's redemptive love for His church. This means that the gospel of Jesus Christ provides the enablement for God-glorifying marriages: *gospel vision (Eph 5); gospel power (walk in the Spirit); gospel formation (sanctification through obedience to the gender-specific commands)*.

Countless Christian couples have rested their hope of marital harmony upon the strength of their romantic love. But, the foundation of romantic love lacks the depth and stability necessary to keep a couple moving toward a mature love and toward a godly intimacy. Only the redemptive ideal can provide the necessary incentive for perpetual sacrificial love and only the redemptive ideal provides the divine pattern for a spiritually fruitful marital relationship.