

# Headship for Husbands (3 Do's & 3 Taboos)

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*“The husband is head of the wife.”*

Few biblical concepts are more widely misunderstood or flagrantly misused. Negative views abound. The idea of assigning a headship role to husbands sounds *burdensome* (to guys who don't want that kind of responsibility), *invasive* (to guys comfortable with more distance), *threatening* (to guys who have no idea how to pull it off), and appallingly *attractive* to guys who thrive on power). And that's just the guys. Men and women alike often believe Paul's words put women-down, ignore their value, and disparage their person-hood.

But Paul has something very different in mind. So does the Lord. Let's take a closer, more careful look at these words.

## What a Closer Look Reveals

Headship does not reflect a flaw in either Paul's or God's character. To the contrary, it's a glorious gift. But to see headship's glory we need to see it through God's eyes. That's difficult when we're immersed in a culture that confuses role with worth and has its antennae tightly tuned to any suggestion of gender bias. But let's try. First read Paul's complete statement to see his explanation of what he means by “the husband is head of the wife.”

*Ephesians 5:23...25-28* <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. ... <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself.

The passage we're looking at breaks down into three sections, each covering three things to do and, by implication, three things to avoid – 3 Do's and 3 Taboos

1. Do Love Her | Don't Avoid
2. Do Talk to Her | Don't Be Silent
3. Do Love Her | Don't Be Selfish

## Do Love Her | Don't Avoid

*Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives,  
just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;*

This means to love her even when it costs you (actually, especially when it costs you). Love her the way Christ loves the church: sacrificially. Sometimes loving another costs. When it does, husbands aren't to cringe and avoid difficult situations (hoping the issue will just go away if it's ignored).

## Do Talk to Her | Don't Be Silent

*Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.*

Jesus isn't silent – He speaks to us in the bible and through the Spirit. He initiates conversation using words that wash us clean and move us towards glory. Healing words. Words we long to hear. Words of love and truth. Jesus, again, is the example you're to follow.

Talking to your wife doesn't mean merely responding after she starts talking. No. It means *you* start conversations as well. It also means you don't tune out – at least without first telling her that it's about you (your exhaustion, your awareness that the chops are burning on the grill) and not because she's not important to you. (She needs to hear this.)

Don't stay silent = don't wait for her to initiate verbally.

### **Do Love Her | Don't Be Selfish**

*Ephesians 5:28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.  
He who loves his own wife loves himself.*

It's interesting that God mentions love a second time when He's talking to husbands. God often matches His commands to the people who most need to hear them. Wives generally don't need to be told to focus on love – husbands apparently do.

“As you love yourself” means what you're afraid it means: it means to love her with the same amount of attention and care you show to yourself. You're not passive about your own needs and desires; don't be passive about hers. This means you have to notice her – just like she's supposed to notice you. (See The Suitable Helper (Getting It Right). It means you're to be unselfish, as Paul says elsewhere:

*Philippians 2:3-4 <sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; <sup>4</sup>do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

Looking out for his wife's interests is the essence of how a husband submits to his wife.

### **A Brief Caution (from me) to Wives**

Notice to whom these commands are addressed: to husbands, not to wives. God tells husbands to do these things. He does not tell wives to make sure our husbands comply.

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#### **Why I Left Out Ephesians 5:24**

Ephesians 5:24 refers only to wives' submission to their husbands. This post focuses on husbands' submission to their wives. Note, however, that Paul introduces this whole section by applying submission to both husbands and wives: Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ (Ephesians 5:21). (I've saved the topic of wives' submission for another post.)

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