

A Wife in Covenant

To Begin With - There are many passages in scripture giving vivid instructions on particular expectations, commands, blessings and curses for wives in the covenant of marriage. Many of these are direct commands to wives. Nevertheless, we cannot forget what we have studied thus far on the nature of covenantal marriage.

First, to the husbands - you are always responsible for the state of your marriage, for the obedience or disobedience of your wife, for her graciousness to you and to the world around her. This means that in a certain way, *your wife does not have any problems*. At least none that you will not be required to give an account.

Second, to the wives - this in no way decreases your responsibility before God as a private person for your actions, your attitudes, your words, and your responsiveness to your husband. As far as it goes for you, *your sins are your sins*. The husband is responsible, but this does not rule out the fact that you may be at fault.

The Covenant Picture – Again (Eph 5:23) - We went over this grammar lesson before, but it bears repeating. You cannot help being a picture of the church and her response to Christ. As we pray for reformation, we are praying for a church that will again be in submission to her Head. But we will not have that, nor know what it looks like until submission to covenant heads in families is occurring.

The Power of a Godly Wife - “An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones” (Prov 12:4). Wives underestimate the impact they have, for good or ill.

A Gracious Wife is a Woman of the Word - Do not measure yourself by your own standards and do not ask your husband. Let the Word be your mirror to reveal to you who you are (Deut 8:3, James 1:23, 1 Tim 2:11). Always look away to Christ for your justification and sanctification. As a wife and mother, you will constantly experience the temptation to think there just isn't time for Bible reading right now. A wife should be known for being a disciple of her husband (1 Cor 14:34-35).

A Gracious Wife Respects Her Husband - Eph 5:33 calls wives to ‘fear’ or ‘reverence’ their husbands. This is more than simply not being disrespectful. There must be a positive display of admiration, honor, and reverence to and about the husband (“*Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons*” - Songs 2:3), imitating Sarah (1 Pet 3:5-6). When this fear accompanies chaste behavior, God uses it as a means to change husbands (vv 1-2).

A Gracious Wife is Responsive to Her Husband - Songs 2:3 continues “*I sat down in his shade with great delight*” and goes on to describe the erotic love of husband and wife. Reverence is connected to sexual responsiveness, and so the lack of the former often affects the latter. But she is to gladly receive his advances, both as a holy blessing (Heb 13:4), and as a protection for her husband (1 Cor 7:3-4). “*I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me*” (Songs 7:10).

The Wife as Helper - In obeying God to fill the earth and subdue it, a woman does this primarily with her eye towards her husband.

A Gracious Wife is Home-centered - They are ‘*into husbands, into children... homemakers*’ (Titus 2:4-5). “*She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness*” (Prov 31:27). A godly wife must develop and cultivate great managerial skills. She is not the house servant-girl, she is the executive officer of the home. She shops wisely (Prov 31:14), cooks well (v.15), and thinks long term (v16, 24).

A Gracious Wife is Wise and Kind - “*She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness*” (Prov 31:26). She is a great confidant to her husband, a fountain of wisdom and insight. And he thankfully receives her counsel because it is clothed in honor and kindness. When her husband and her children think of her words, her tone, her attitude in the home, they think of wisdom and kindness.

A Crown of Glory – or Rotteness to His Bones

“It is not good that man should be alone” (Gen 1:18) - As a wife, you have been created to be a great blessing to your husband. But you will only be his crown of glory if you are obedient to the Lord.

Better to Be Alone - “*Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.*” (Prov 21:9). “*Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.*” (Prov 21:19). Wives must mind their tongues - complaining, pouting, nagging, moaning, provoking, are never allowed.

Outward Appearance Matters - To dress well (“*Her clothing is fine linen and purple*” - Prov 31:22) is to reflect her husband's glory, which is also reflected in the keeping of her hair (1 Cor 11:5-9). The way a wife appears declares something of how her husband is doing.

Conclusion - Respect and honor are at the center of your responsibilities. The command is given, and God knew full-well the knucklehead He gave you. Remember, discontent blinds women. Cultivating gratitude and respect, both in the heart and in outward actions and words creates more and more respectability in him, and opens your eyes to his goodness. Go to the Lord in repentance and faith. God Himself will provide you with the wisdom and grace you need.

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