

Ministry of a Wife and Husband

As leader of this session, you are encountering three possible issues. One is most couples have not clearly heard that each one of them is a child of God, a recipient of God's lavish love. They also may never have been brought to see this in their spouse. Depending on who is in the class, there might be people who are not Christian. They see themselves as looking into what being a Christian is all about, or what they can learn about parenting or grandparenting.

This seventh session is aimed mostly at those who are spouses and who are Christians. However, many of the principles put forth in this session will be beneficial for those who don't see themselves as Christians. Whoever is in the class must be treated with respect and valued for who they are. Every one of us has more to learn if we are to fulfill the calling of being a wife or a husband. No matter what one believes, a healthy relationship and understanding between a husband and a wife is a win-win for both. And if they have children, those children will benefit greatly if their parents cherish each other and have good ways of working out their differences.

It must be observed that Ephesians 5:21-35 starts out talking about Christians' specific ministries. It names the bond between husband and wife as the first priority relationship. They are the hub of the wheel. Children will come, and after many years, they will go. They will witness what is going on with their parents. If they see there is a healthy nourishing relationship between their father and their mother, they will feel free to move on with their lives, not feeling in some way that they have to be there to hold the family together. It is very important that mom and dad don't see their relating to their children as the very first order of business. Important as children are, they are most apt to turn out fine when they witness their parents working together, settling differences, living their faith, and enjoying each other.

The second issue is how the wife regards the husband and how the husband sees his wife. This is an area where there can be much misunderstanding. As a result, there can be much unnecessary anguish and even abuse. Our sinful human nature is basically selfish and self-centered. So here we have two sinners living together, making decisions together, sorting out differences with each other. Facing this, we can see where there is much room for differences to become daunting, where decisions made may seem like no consideration of the other person was present, where two people just start passing each other as in their own worlds. Society's messages can make this worse. The congregation may also overlook the challenges married couples face. Realizing this, session seven gives people the opportunity to discuss some of the concerns people have, but within the context of what Scripture says. In this one brief session, the emphasis is on the ministry of each to the other.

This leads to the importance of looking out for each other, being thoughtful, caring, ready to forgive, yet also having boundaries, not putting up with abuse, not harping on past actions or bringing up old dirt. There are some good people to watch and listen to on the Internet. They can be helpful. See Gary Smalley and Tim Keller videos on marriage. As leader, you can check some of these out so you know what is being suggested to the class. It is important couples continue to grow in their companionship,



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and grow in their value of the gift of sex in their relationship. All of these are deep subjects so cannot be discussed at length. As leader, it is good to realize this lesson though important, cannot solve all the problems people are facing. But talking can open up the possibility of realizing how crucial the relationship between husband and wife is. Surely, this is also critically important for the children growing up within these homes.

The third issue is defining what the ministry of a wife and that of a husband is. There is much room for misunderstanding here. There is also the factor that, for example, a wife might be quite assertive and outgoing whereas a husband may be more passive and introverted. In other words, their personalities can easily complicate what is being said here. Now we know that love can give people the capacity to relish their differences and work out their problems. What this lesson is saying is that the wife has the responsibility to respect, honor, and lift up her husband. The Lord has given him the responsibility of making sure the marriage and the children are functioning in a healthy state. So, if the husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church, he will not be thinking about his privileges nearly as much as his responsibility of having everything functioning inside the home as like clockwork. In this way he brings strength and peace to what is going on. The wife in turn will serve the Lord by listening to and respecting her husband as the one who has the major responsibility for the wellbeing of the family. Because she cares, her presence will knit the whole family together as she tends to the needs of each family member as unto the Lord.

Couples may recognize their marriage is not functioning like this. Single parents may already have separated from or divorced their spouse. One lesson cannot attempt to solve, even address many of these issues. This means the subject of how God has set up a marriage giving both wives and husbands ministries to each other, must remain the major topic being addressed. So, keeping that focus during teaching and discussions will be important.

As leader or facilitator make sure you do seven things:

1. Go back and review briefly the Leader's Guide for Session One. Remind the class of the rules and share words of welcome and encouragement.
2. Prepare yourself by filling out the questionnaire you handed out on "Ministry of the Wife, Ministry of the Husband".
3. Read through the written material for Session Seven.
4. Review the power point you will be going through with the class.
5. Write down any examples from your own life and thinking that touches on what this session is about.
6. Pray for each person in the course.
7. Print off the questionnaire leading to Session 8 on "Fathers, The Challenges They Face". Hand it out at the end of the class.

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Remember, if you have questions or concerns, you can always call 612-708-1875 to discuss those.

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