

## IF ROLES WERE REVERSED...

*Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men **should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets**" (Matthew 7:12).* The foregoing reference is what Bible believers call The Golden Rule. Rightly so. But have you ever considered the context in which Jesus uttered these words? You have not, perhaps. Now see, it was in the context of prayer, in the context of asking and receiving. He meant that if you expect to receive when you ask, then give when you are asked. In the context of marriage and family life, many men expect their wives to give all without demanding anything, while they keep receiving everything without giving anything. In their warped thinking, the wife should give love, submission and obedience to them, affection and attention to the children, care to their visiting relatives and even honour and respect to their friends. That would have been probably acceptable if only they were willing to reciprocate even half as much.

The woman fills somewhat of a puzzling role. She has to manage the home, cook delicious meals, do the laundry, tend the children, look fit and trim, be available to her husband, and, very often, be a working-class woman earning salary. Everyone wants a chunk of her time: the depressed husband, the upset children, the ill-tempered boss, the often-inconsiderate in-laws and, of course, God, her Creator. The demands on the woman could wear anyone out, even a saint. Yet she has to smile at all times, rise from bed though tired, cook delicious meals from meager funds provided by some penny-pinching husband, and never complain of being left without assistance. Fair? Hardly. Love is reciprocal. The Master's teaching is, "**Give, and it shall be given unto you**" (Luke 6:38). But women scarcely get in return from men the good measure of what they give.

Now men, let us view the picture in our mind's eyes and ponder on the scenario if roles were to be reversed. So, don your aprons, roll up your sleeves and let the home-keeping begin. First call, you were too late in bed and now at 5.00 am; up, up, breakfast must be ready before seven o'clock. What, can't you see the sitting room is all a sight after the kids' playtime last night? And, ah, the kids are still in bed and it is 6 o'clock already! Jenny, Tim and Angela (aged 5, 3 and 1 respectively) need to be prepared for school and crèche. Meanwhile, Angela is just getting to sleep after giving you an eventful night. Your head throbs and it's only morning, yet, there are many such over-laden hours before bedtime? So, you dart back and forth from the kitchen to the bathroom. The clock ticks away and you must

be at the office by 8 o'clock. It was hectic but, well, you managed to pull through the morning household tasks. The children are all dressed up, breakfast is set, but you have to start preparing for the afternoon bit – school run, lunch, dinner . . . and finally literally drag your frame into bed for a much-needed rest. Sleep mercifully takes over the rejuvenation of your body but this is only Monday, four of such days are still ahead this week! Sometimes, this is even a best-case scenario; the worst-case scenario had better not be imagined. Imagine the attendant nervous breakdown, chronic depression, health breakdown and even sudden death reported among womenfolk all over the world!

## WOMAN RIGHTS OR HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS?

A Nigerian newspaper reported an address recently delivered by a woman to some clergymen. The address had somewhat of a curious title: “Woman rights are human rights.” The speaker observed that “women work two-thirds of the world’s working hours. In some countries, women perform up to 80 percent of the agricultural labor, bear and rear children, take care of the house, family, sick ones and loved ones. Women are the backbone of our societies and countries, yet, they are systematically denied all of their human rights.” While her observation may have some merit, the issue at stake transcends human rights. It is a matter of human righteousness. The natural man devoid of God’s transforming grace and righteousness is self-centered and inconsiderate. The whole world revolves around him, and the wife is one of the satellites around his orbit, or so he thinks. This mindset is rooted in perverted ancient philosophies. Roman philosophy held that the woman exists solely for the pleasure of the man. While a wife she gives a man pleasure, later she gives him children, and in old age she weeps at his grave. A Greek orator, said, “We have whores for our pleasure, harlots for daily use, and wives for procreation of legitimate children, and faithful preservation of our property.” Never do they see a woman as a beautiful handiwork of the Almighty God, to be loved, honored and listened to.

It was an important advance made in society when Christianity gave such a direction as **“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife . . .”** (1 Peter 3:7). Most religions of the world regard women as being worthy of little honour or respect. She has been considered as a slave or as a mere instrument to gratify the passions of man. Christianity came however and changed all that. One of its elementary teachings is that a woman is to be treated with respect and appreciation, primarily, because God has made her “a weaker vessel.” **“Weaker”** here does not necessarily refer to feebler capacity, or inferior mental endowments. It means that she is tender and delicate, more fragile and of finer composition both in body and mind. The woman is subject to

infirmities and weaknesses, less capable of enduring fatigue and toil, less adapted to the rough and stormy scenes of life. As such, she should be regarded and treated with special kindness and attention.

### **WEAKER VESSEL HAVING GREAT STRENGTH**

Though made of finer, more delicate qualities, the woman possesses, and even demonstrates great strength, the likes of which many men know nothing about. The woman is the weaker vessel, yes, but she is strong and resilient, self-denying and resourceful, sensitive and refined, satisfying and refreshingly beautiful, self-controlled and resolute, responsible and reliable. Unfortunately, many men do not recognize, much less appreciate, these strengths in their spouses because their eyes are clouded over with false ideas of female inferiority. The truth is that many a “weaker vessel” has been the pillar of strength on which many a man has leaned and from which many of them also have leaped to higher heights. Thus, the saying that behind every successful man is a woman.

Moral and spiritual strength in the godly woman reflects in her joyful submission to her husband, her life of joyful service in the home, her strength of character in the face of ill-treatment by uncooperative in-laws, and sometimes her resilience and fortitude in the painful process of pregnancy, labor and child delivery. A man of God opined that the man must be cruel indeed that would dare insult or assault his wife, that is, after sending her to the region of death to go fetch him a replica of himself. This brings us to the different kinds of husbands there are; look in the mirror and consider which one you are.

### **DIFFERENT KINDS OF HUSBANDS**

***“Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings”*** (1 Samuel 25:2). The man mentioned here was a husband, a sour, sullen brute of a husband. His wife had to bear the full brunt of his churlishness. She was a fine specimen of womanhood; and he a villain. Never was there a day of lovers’ laughter in Nabal’s house, never a word of appreciation for his wife, never a moment of loving embrace, never a time of fruitful communication. What kind of husband would a drunk make? ***“And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light”*** (1 Samuel 25:36). The man was too married to his business and his alcoholic drinks enough to care for the love of a woman. Nabal was obviously a sinner in the sight of God; he was odious to

heaven and disagreeable to men. By his constant sinning and animalistic wickedness, he wore out God's mercy. He was eventually struck dead and poor Abigail was released from the bondage of a miserable existence. Man, are you like that? Which kind of husband are you?

Are you an angry husband or adoring husband, abusive husband or affectionate husband, absentee husband or accessible husband? Which kind of husband are you? Are you an adulterous husband or an abiding husband; an aggressive, assaulting husband or an appreciative, approving husband; an affronting husband or an affirming husband? Husband, are you apathetically arrogant or absolutely attentive? Are you loving enough to express appreciation to your wife for her many kind acts towards you and the children?

Wrong ideas of masculinity that celebrate the absence of emotion in men have robbed many men of a rewarding family life. Never to feel appreciation for your woman but to stifle the feeling, is that being a man? Is it being a man to choke back at sincerely telling your wife, "Thank God I married you"? What do you call masculinity? Is it to see grace and not be able to commend it? To see virtue in your wife and not be able to appreciate it? Is that masculinity? I think not. Men, what is wrong in sending our wives into transports of joy by appreciating them to their face? Say an honest good word to your wife and watch how she goes about her day's activities with light-hearted ease and unbelievable speed. An unappreciated wife is an enslaved woman, always seeing herself as miserable and in bonds.

The virtuous woman's husband was not one to feel shame at praising his wife or, even getting the children to do same. His words of commendation recorded down for our benefit are fulsome, generous, heartfelt and uplifting, "***Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all***" (*Proverbs 31:28,29*). What an encomium! Husbands' duty far transcends mere verbal expressions however; it goes as far as purposeful actions.

## DUTIES OF KIND HUSBANDS

Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Colossian Christians admonished husbands to "***. . . love your wives, and be not bitter against them***" (*Colossians 3:19*). Someone would consider this superfluous. But is it really? Doesn't bottled up bitterness find expression in outward apathy to the welfare of the wife? Bitterness chokes out love, appreciation, fellowship. It saps off the sweet nectar of family harmony. "***And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for***

***Christ's sake hath forgiven you"*** (*Ephesians 4:32*).

Simply put, husbands owe their wives the fourfold duty of protection, provision, praise, and prayer. Only the 'Nabals' of this world will not seek to protect their wives from the verbal assaults of inconsiderate in-laws and neighbors. More importantly, husbands worth the name realize that ***"... if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel"*** (*1 Timothy 5:8*). Therefore, they place a premium on making necessary provision for their wives. Economic exigencies sometimes make it necessary for the wife to take up paid employment outside the home. While this may be permissible as supplementary income, it certainly does not absolve the husband from his financial responsibilities. In any case, Christian couples have found real benefit in operating a mutual financial plan. But it has to be mutual indeed!

Prayer is one great duty godly husbands owe their wives. In weal or woe, pray for your wife. Rebekah was barren but Isaac, rather than criticize, despise, hate or even give the cold shoulder to her, ***"... entreated the Lord for his wife . . . and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived"*** (*Genesis 25:21*).

## **DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THAT OTHERS DO UNTO YOU**

What if you were the woman whose dream for pregnancy is unfulfilled, how would you want to be treated? ***"Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"*** (*Matthew 7:12*). You would, in that case want to be empathized with, wouldn't you? You would want to be treated with love, patience and understanding. Then do the same to your wife. If you were a woman heavy with pregnancy, and yet have to meet with the children's incessant demands for care and attention, how would you want to be treated? Then do the same to your wife. If you had gone to the workplace to face the heat of the day, then came back and plunged into the kitchen to face the heat of the fire, how would you want to be treated? Please, do same to your wife. If you were sick and indisposed so the dinner isn't prepared and yet you are hungry, how would you want to be treated? Do even so to your wife. If you have borne the heat of the kitchen, bearing scalds from hot water and cuts from knives perhaps, and then somehow, just somehow, the salt was a little bit over, and then you are the woman, how would you want to be treated? Do exactly the same thing to your wife; ***"for this is the law and the prophets."*** If we stand, sit and put ourselves in the shoes of the wife and imagine how we should have been treated, things will change in our home. The complaints, criticisms would reduce, and we will manifest

more love, care and concern and our homes will be like the haven of rest. We would be happy; our wives would be happy and the children too. May the Lord help us as we pray to change the present situation in our homes in Jesus' name. *(Culled from Christian Women Mirror June 2006)*