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a resource in:

Marriage

Roles, Responsibilities, & Decision Making in Marriage



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Roles, Responsibilities, and Decision Making in Marriage

Directions: Read through the verses and information below, allowing adequate time for discussion about each topic. The material below should not be considered exhaustive; rather, it should serve as a beginning point for you to search the Scripture and to learn more about marriage.

I. SCRIPTURAL DIRECTION AND BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES.

A. Jesus Christ gave us the perfect example.

In thinking about your role in marriage, consider the example that Christ provided from His life on earth. He fully exemplified servant leadership, balancing headship of the body of believers and submission to God.

Philippians 2:5-8, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Matthew 20:26-27, "but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

B. Scripture provides us with direction for God's design for marriage.

Society's standards for marriage and for the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives are ever-changing and often do not align with Scripture. Couples must regularly consult the Scriptures for direction and guidance. The Word reveals God's design for marriage and helps identify and correct unbiblical ways of relating to one another.

2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

C. Marriage is a joint effort that requires mutual submission.

Living out your roles in marriage, agreeing on and fulfilling responsibilities, and making decisions for your family should be a joint process characterized by mutual submission. As in everything else you do, your actions and decisions should be consistent with your love for the Lord rather than selfish ambition.

Ephesians 5:21, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

Colossians 3:23, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

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D. Seek wise counsel.

As decisions are faced in marriage, it is often helpful to seek guidance from wise individuals. Getting another perspective can provide a different point of view, reveal blind spots, and help you learn from the experiences of others.

Proverbs 11:14, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

Proverbs 12:15, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise."

Proverbs 19:20, "Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end."

E. God's Word provides us with a foundation we can trust.

Through the living Word, God has provided sufficient teaching and guidance to understand the plan of salvation and to know how to live a holy life. This can give you comfort in your marriage, knowing that God's Word is always trustworthy and the best source for counsel in decision making in marriage.

2 Peter 1:3-4, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

F. God has promised wisdom to those who ask.

At certain times in life you may not have specific scriptural guidance on making a specific decision. In these cases, God has promised that He will give you wisdom to work through these things. You can have confidence that He will help you through life as you humbly seek Him and walk "in the way of wisdom."

Proverbs 4:11-13, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life."

James 1:5-6, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."

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G. Prayer must be a vital part in making decisions.

Fervent prayer is a key for every individual and couple who are seeking to make decisions. God is a loving heavenly Father who wants the best for His children. His plans and purposes are for your good and the benefit of His kingdom. Therefore, while submitting your will to God can be a difficult task, it also can provide you with great peace and comfort. God is good and trustworthy, even when your circumstances are uncertain.

1 John 5:14-15, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Matthew 7:9-11, "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

II. PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

A. Roles in marriage.

1. Each spouse is equal in value, yet distinct in role.

God designed an order to be followed in marriage and family, described in *1 Corinthians 11:3*, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." To maintain this order, He has established roles for husbands and wives. God's intent is for marriage to reflect the relationship and oneness of the Trinity (see how Jesus referred to His oneness with the Father in *John 17:21-23*). Each person of the Trinity is distinct, yet intimately connected with the other. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each equal in value, yet distinct in role. Similarly, husbands and wives are equal in value, yet distinct in role. God's image is revealed in both the husband and the wife.

2. These roles are designed to be complementary.

The Scripture contains both general and specific teachings about the roles of husbands and wives. Consideration must be given to both Scriptures for husbands and Scriptures for wives; God designed these roles to complement one another, and one role is incomplete without the other. For example, wives are able to submit to their husbands more easily when husbands love their wives with the self-sacrificing love that Christ exemplified on earth. Likewise, husbands more naturally show love and affection toward their wives when the husbands feel esteemed and valued. These principles, found in *Ephesians 5:21-33*, provide some very important insights into God's design for men and women.

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3. Spouses should practice mutual respect, honor, and submission.

Through the Word, God reveals a number of important principles about His design for relationships. The importance of mutual respect, honor, and submission is one of those themes. For example, He affirms the need for these principles between parents and children (*Ephesians 6:2*), servants and masters (*1 Timothy 6:1*), citizens and governmental authorities (*1 Peter 2:17*), and church members and church leadership (*1 Timothy 5:17*).

Mutual respect, honor, and submission are also keenly present or absent in marital relationships. Their presence helps relationships flow more smoothly through the ups and downs of life. Their absence leads to emotional hurt, disconnection, and conflict. Note these principles in the verses below:

Ephesians 5:21, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

1 Corinthians 7:3, "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband."

It is easy to critique how well you feel your spouse is doing at showing respect, honor, and submission to you. However, each husband and wife should really focus on assessing how he or she is doing personally by looking into the mirror of the Word.

4. There are specific teachings for husbands and wives.

The Scripture passages below are organized into verses specifically addressed to wives and verses specifically addressed to husbands. Note how God encourages husbands and wives to meet their spouse's deepest needs. It is our privilege to help each other to develop into Christ's likeness and to reflect God's glory.

- a. Husbands, love your wives.

Husbands are called to assume the role of a Christ-like servant leader who will watch for and guide the course of the family. This role includes loving in a self-sacrificing way that does what is necessary to make a wife feel nourished and cherished.

Husbands must remember that while they have been given the role as the spiritual leader of the home, it does not give them authorization to "rule" in an authoritarian way. Being domineering, controlling, or disrespectful to one's wife is sinful. Likewise, not fulfilling one's duty to attend to the spiritual needs of the family due to absence, passivity, apathy, or neglect is sin. The husband is to be intentional about understanding and being sensitive to his wife. Not doing so will hinder the husband's spiritual life (*1 Peter 3:7*).

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Ephesians 5:25-30, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

(See also Ephesians 5:33, Colossians 3:1 and 1 Peter 3:7)

Husbands have also been given the role of providing for the needs of their family.

1 Timothy 5:8, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

b. Wives, respect your husbands.

Wives are called to respect and be submissive to their husbands. This involves a willingness to assume the role of a wife that is Christ-like, encouraging, respectful, and helpful to their husbands.

Respecting one's husband does not indicate that the wife is of lesser value than the husband. Far from it! Rather, it involves being his partner in the way that is designed to bring out the best in him. God's design for a wife's role in marriage does not include being domineering nor being a doormat. Either extreme will promote an unbiblical marital relationship and needs to be corrected.

Genesis 2:18, "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet [a helper suitable] for him."

Ephesians 5:22-24, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."

(See also Colossians 3:18, 1 Peter 3:1-2, and Ephesians 5:33)

5. Instructions for both husbands and wives.

A number of roles and responsibilities apply equally to both spouses. The listing of verses below is not exhaustive; rather, it serves as a starting point for your own study of the Word on this topic.

a. Have a servant's heart.

Jesus taught by His example that each should willingly serve the other. Even though He was Master of all, Jesus taught that joy comes from serving rather than being served.

John 13:12-17, "So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

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- b. Raise your children to know the Lord.

Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

- c. Respect church leadership.

Hebrews 13:17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

- d. Respect governmental authority.

1 Peter 2:13-16, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

B. Responsibilities.

In marriage, each spouse needs to have a role that is recognized and valued with certain responsibilities to which he or she is held accountable. Take time to delegate responsibilities, deciding which spouse will take ownership over specific tasks, areas of the home, decisions, etc. Delegating responsibilities is a process whereby both the husband and wife mutually agree on assigning the responsibility for each task. In this way, each spouse makes a commitment to take care of something and is accountable to the other spouse for following through.

1. There are benefits to deciding on responsibilities.

While having both spouses involved in various responsibilities is beneficial, one still needs to take ownership. Responsibility involves action, follow-through, and accountability. Defining roles and responsibilities is beneficial because it reduces the possibility for misunderstandings ("I thought you were going to take care of that"), blame ("I did my part already, but you didn't"), and criticism ("Why did you do it that way?"). A clear assignment of responsibilities reduces the opportunity for conflict, such as when trash day comes around or a bill is due. Defining responsibilities also allows you to form healthy boundaries in your marriage. Think of it this way: "Boundaries help determine who is responsible for what. If you understand who owns [is responsible for] what, you then know who must take responsibility for it."¹

2. Be willing to help each other.

While deciding on responsibilities is helpful, spouses should not be overly rigid about who does the tasks. If your spouse is overwhelmed and needs help getting his/her responsibilities taken care of, by all means, help! In doing so, you help bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2) and attend to your own personal responsibilities (Galatians 6:5).

When spouses feel support from each other during stressful times, trust and closeness are fostered. Spouses who work cooperatively empower one another, help each other feel needed, and sometimes accomplish tasks more quickly. As is stated in *Ecclesiastes 4:9*, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour."

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3. How are responsibilities defined and determined?

Responsibilities in marriage are largely determined by a spouse's preferences, skills, interests, abilities, and time availability. Because of these variables, the definition of responsibilities will differ from couple to couple. If one spouse has more skill, discipline, or interest in taking care of something, then he or she should certainly feel free to do it.

4. Certain responsibilities can be shared, yet are "owned" by one of the spouses.

There may be certain domains in which the husband or wife desires to have "ownership," and these domains should be respected. For example, a couple may determine that the wife holds the primary role of taking care of the family's finances. The husband has input and helps, as needed, while the wife takes the primary responsibility for budgeting, paying bills, etc. Or perhaps a couple may determine that the husband will have the role of taking care of the garden since he enjoys it as a hobby. For this particular couple, while each spouse may participate in some aspects of gardening and will enjoy its harvest, the husband will take primary responsibility for it. These illustrations are but two examples of how responsibilities are in one sense "shared" by both spouses and yet "owned" by one of the spouses.

5. Avoid imbalance.

Problems can easily arise if the roles are not clearly defined, are too rigid, or if one or both of the spouses isn't being accountable for taking care of his/her responsibilities. For example, if one spouse makes all of the decisions and has complete control, the marriage will be unbalanced. Conversely, if one spouse avoids responsibilities, procrastinates, or does not follow through on completing tasks, the marriage will be just as imbalanced. In order to avoid problems in these areas, remember to "check-in" with your spouse and discuss how each of you feels about the arrangement of responsibilities in the marriage. It is particularly important to have "check-in's" during life transitions, such as the transition to parenthood, as roles and responsibilities may need to shift. Clear, proactive communication can help you deal with these issues when they arise.

C. Decision making.

1. Be proactive about decision making.

The foundation for making good decisions is a prayerful attitude that is submissive to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Discuss your expectations for how decisions will be made and how the two of you manage decision-making grid-lock. Questions to consider may include:

- a. What types of decisions require a discussion between the two of you?
- b. What types of decisions can you each make without consulting the other? For example, making purchases of small items for the house may not need a discussion between the spouses. However, a decision about purchasing a new car will likely require a consensus.
- c. What will you do and who will you contact when you cannot agree on a decision?

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2. Leaving, cleaving, and making decisions as a couple.

Particularly in the beginning of a marital relationship, making decisions can be a difficult process. Each spouse may be used to making decisions on his/her own without having to consider another person. Or, decisions were made with the help of parents. The decision-making process may also be influenced by how each spouse sees his/her role in the marriage. In marriage, part of “leaving and cleaving” involves mutual decision making. Some individuals may need to shift away from a situation in which parents or roommates had primary influence on decisions. Instead, decisions are made considering one’s spouse first.

Other examples of potentially difficult decisions relate to holidays and in-laws. A married couple has to make decisions about how and where they will celebrate holidays. These decisions can be particularly difficult when the couple does not live near one or both sides of the family. They can be further complicated when in-laws put pressure on the couple to spend time with them. This pressure can be intentional or unintentional, but difficult nonetheless. Realize that compromise and flexibility are often required for these types of decisions. However, in the end, each couple must come to their own decision about what to do.

3. Common sense, logic, and signs can all be a part of decision making.

Sometimes decision making is simple; unfortunately, many times it isn’t. However, if you follow the principles set out in God’s Word, you can have confidence that the Lord will see you through. In decision making, you need to avoid both the error of the Jews (over-focus on supernatural signs) and the Greeks (over-focus on earthy wisdom). Both ways hinder a true understanding of God’s ways.

1 Corinthians 1:22-24, “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

Like the Greeks, some people over-focus on learning, earthly wisdom, and logic. Because of this, many of them find faith to be an illogical and foreign concept. However, believers know that without faith it is impossible to please God (*Hebrews 11:6*). Scriptural principles like “going the extra mile” (*Matthew 5:41*) or “turning the other cheek” (*Matthew 5:39*) are not learned from common sense. Rather, those are spiritual principles and matters of faith that go against what is natural. In the context of biblical decision making, this means that you must not make decisions solely upon what “everyone’s doing,” or what appears to be the most natural or easiest solution. Rather, your primary allegiance in decision making must be to biblical teaching and principles.

Conversely, like the Jews, some people seek to oversimplify decisions by looking for signs or feelings that indicate a direction. For example, some people believe that if something happens easily or goes smoothly, it is automatically a sign of God’s favor. On the other hand, sometimes people believe that if something is difficult or they encounter setbacks, it must be a sign that God thinks something is bad. However, while the ease or difficulty of working through something may be an indicator of God’s direction, these factors are not sufficient evidence, in themselves, to determine God’s direction. God can speak in any way that He chooses and sometime it can be in the form of a sign. However, remember that human beings are susceptible to reading into things based on their biases and interpretations. Finally, remember that Satan can appear as an angel of light (*2 Corinthians 11:14*).

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4. Seek counsel.

Proverbs 13:10 says, “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.” You may seek out different individuals for each topic area, or you may choose to consult an individual about more than one area. Remember to seek counsel from individuals who are wise in the Lord and who will have the ability to advise you even if the advice isn’t what you want to hear.

5. We have freedom and responsibility.

We need to remember that God could have written the Bible in any way that He wanted. That means He could have included a ten-volume set with answers to common questions that come up in parenting, choosing a job, deciding on a college, and getting a new water heater. But He didn’t. In the Scripture, God has set out guidelines for what His children need to do and what they need to avoid. He didn’t design His children to be robots without any freedom to make decisions on their own, and He didn’t design them to be moral free-agents that could do whatever they want. See the figure below. When you have taken care to live within the teachings of God’s Word, you can have confidence that He will honor your requests made with a humble heart.



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6. Understanding preferences, house rules, organizational norms, and absolutes.

The figure below helps outline the different levels of decisions you will face in your marriage. Sometimes, difficulty may arise when the two of you see the issue on different levels of the pyramid. Before you will be able to come to a decision or conclusion, you need to agree on the underlying level of importance of the decision.



Below are descriptions of each level:

- Preferences are personal opinions, decisions, and choices. For example, your favorite restaurant, color, or model of car are all preferences. Two individuals may agree or disagree about each other's preferences, but neither is wrong.
- House rules are rules of conduct established by families or groups of closely related people. For example, in a family the parents have the privilege and responsibility to create and maintain the house rules for their own home. Two sets of parents may agree or disagree about these rules; however, they each must determine what they believe is best for their own family and abide by it. For example, if one family sets the curfew for the children at 9:30pm and the other sets the curfew at 10:00pm, which one is wrong? Neither. While they may disagree with each other, each set of parents has the responsibility to set the house rules for their own home.
- Organizational norms are standards of conduct, behavior, dress, and participation/non-participation in activities established by businesses, churches, and social/service organizations. This level is where many church customs, traditions, and practices are found.

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- Biblical absolutes are God’s moral laws that are explicitly stated in the Bible as either commands or principles. These are true for all people, in all places, at all times. “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (*Exodus 20:14*) is a biblical absolute. Adultery is sin in God’s eyes – period. This has been true ever since the law was given and will remain true as long as the world stands.

Each level of the pyramid above has a different authority. For example, the authority for biblical absolutes is God’s Word. An organization determines organizational norms, while a family unit determines house rules. In a marriage, house rules, which may be described as personal “convictions,” become a couple decision rather than an individual decision. Each spouse should prayerfully and respectfully consider the other’s opinion, mutually submitting to one another.

This chart is implemented in the following example of deciding how to school children.

- a. Always start with “biblical absolutes.”

Ask yourselves, “What does the Bible say about the education of children?” A few of the verses that speak to raising children include:

Deuteronomy 6:4-7, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go:”

Clearly, there is a biblical mandate to raise children to know God’s ways. However, note the biblical instruction does not specifically address how children should be taught mathematics or geography or how to teach a child with a learning disability. Therefore, at the Biblical Absolutes level we have been given a clear teaching about the spiritual nurturance of children; however, it does not provide a command about other aspects of education.

- b. Identify organizational norms.

Ask yourselves, “Has the church given direction on the education of children?”

The Elder Body has affirmed the biblical truth that children are to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The elders have concluded that the education of children is a decision that parents must make thoughtfully and prayerfully; they acknowledge that parents of one household may come to different conclusions about what is best for their children (public, private, or home schooling) than parents of another household. That said, the elders encourage all parents to have respect and Christ-like love for those who choose differently.

Therefore, the organizational norm has affirmed the biblical absolute and has given guidance that parents should prayerfully consider the options, choose what best fits their family, and respect those that choose differently.

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- c. Create house rules.

Ask yourselves, “What do we, as a couple, believe about the education of children?”

House rules are accepted and/or created by a couple. Many house rules develop by default without much thought. For example, which chair does each person in the family sit in at supper time? Other times, house rules simply develop out of what the parents grew up with in their own families of origin. Conversely, some house rules are the result of a deliberate process of information gathering, prayer, discussion, and counsel.

A couple may find that they have very similar or dissimilar views on the education of children. However, as they pray, discuss, and gather information, they can come together to make a decision. Ultimately, the parents must make a decision for their own children and family, not anyone else’s. It is okay for them to choose an education option that is different from another couple. However, it is not okay for the couple to judge another couple’s decision. Once the couple has decided on what type of education they would like their children to have, the decision-making process is complete, and they must work toward implementing their decision.

7. Biblical decision-making principles and steps.

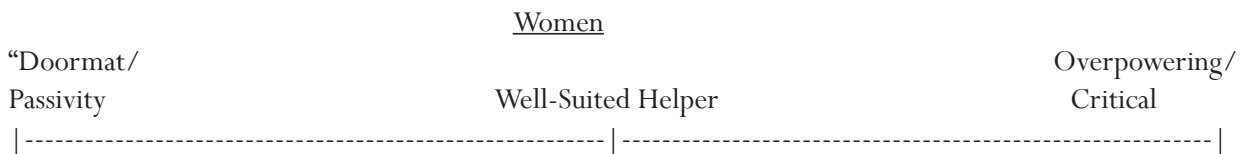
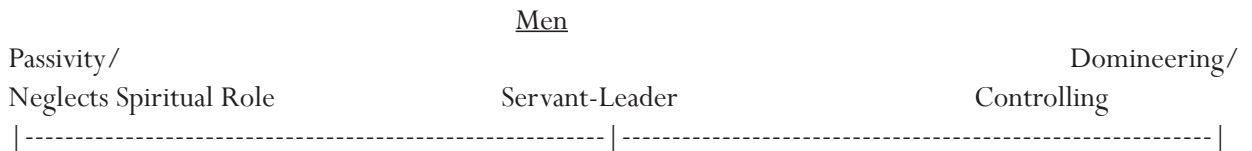
Below are some steps to consider when working through a decision-making process.

- a. Identify and clarify the decision that needs to be made. Humbly seek God’s guidance through prayer.
- b. Study the Word to determine if the decision involves biblical absolutes. If so, follow the scriptural principles laid out in the Bible.
- c. If the decision does not involve biblical absolutes or if the Bible has no explicit command or principle about the decision, see if the church provides teaching or guidance on how to proceed.
- d. Seek the counsel of someone you know and trust.
- e. Realize that some decisions have multiple options, any of which may be acceptable to God. In these cases, you can use biblical wisdom principles to make a decision.
 - Identify the needs of those who will be affected by the decision.
 - Consider the short-term and long-term impacts of each option.
 - Evaluate pros and cons of the various aspects of the decision.
- f. Remember that just because something happens easily or smoothly doesn’t necessarily mean that it is good, and just because something is difficult doesn’t necessarily mean that it is bad.
- g. Implement your choice.
- h. Re-evaluate the actual implications of your choice.

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III. COUPLE QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES.

1. Read *Ephesians 5:21-33* together and discuss what this passage means for our marriage. Share thoughts on the roles of a husband and wife and how you see them in our marriage.
2. From what sources did your concept of roles for a husband and a wife come? How do you view the relationship your parents had? Did it fit a biblical pattern? Have you had other life experiences that have shaped the way that you view these roles?
3. Review Section II, A, 3 on Mutual Respect, Honor, and Submission. Discuss how it applies to our marriage and ways that we can improve.
4. Is there any part of fulfilling your biblically-defined role as husband (servant-leadership) and wife (respect) that makes you uncomfortable? What would help you feel more comfortable?
5. What differences do you see between a husband showing authoritarian leadership and servant-leadership?
6. Husbands: Name three specific ways that your wife can encourage you in your role as spiritual leader in your home.
7. What differences do you see between a wife who is a 'help meet' [a helper suitable] for her husband and one who is either controlling or unsupportive?
8. Wives: Name three specific things that your husband does (or could do) that would help you in your spiritual walk.
9. Consider the two continuums below and identify where you perceive yourself to be and where you perceive your spouse to be. How well do our perceptions match? Talk about what we both need to do to encourage each other to live out Christ-like roles.



10. Are there certain areas of the house or certain responsibilities that you would like to take ownership of and would like me to be respectful to?

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11. When you are facing a decision, who or what typically has influence on how we decide? Discuss the factors that influence decisions in the following areas: major purchases (house, car, etc.), job or career changes, family.
 12. The Bible encourages the practice of seeking counsel. How comfortable are you about getting counsel from others if we need help making a decision? Who would we seek out if we had questions on the following topics: finances, spiritual issues, communication, parenting/childrearing, medical issues, emotional concerns, and relationship problems?
 13. Consider a decision we had to make that involved some level of disagreement. Determine if it was a preference, house rule, organizational norm, or biblical absolute. Were we both seeing the issue on the same level?
 14. Consider the list below of some household responsibilities and tasks. For each item, answer the following questions:
 - a. How was this task handled in your family-of-origin? Who took primary responsibility?
 - b. Who is (or should be) responsible for this task in our present-day household?
 - c. Does this item need further discussion in order to clarify expectations or deal with any issues?
- Paying bills
 - Caring for a pet
 - Yard work
 - Car maintenance
 - Laundry
 - Making the bed
 - Doing the dishes
 - Cleaning
 - Encouraging Bible study and prayer
 - Cooking and baking
 - Taking out the trash
 - Health and medical issues
 - Managing finances, investments, and insurance
 - Ensuring home repairs get completed
 - Decorating the house
 - Helping the children with homework
 - Grocery shopping
 - Planning vacations
 - Disciplining the children

References:

Referencing of these materials is not meant to imply an endorsement by the Apostolic Christian Church of America of the author, publisher, or organization that created the materials.

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1. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries in Marriage*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 20.

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