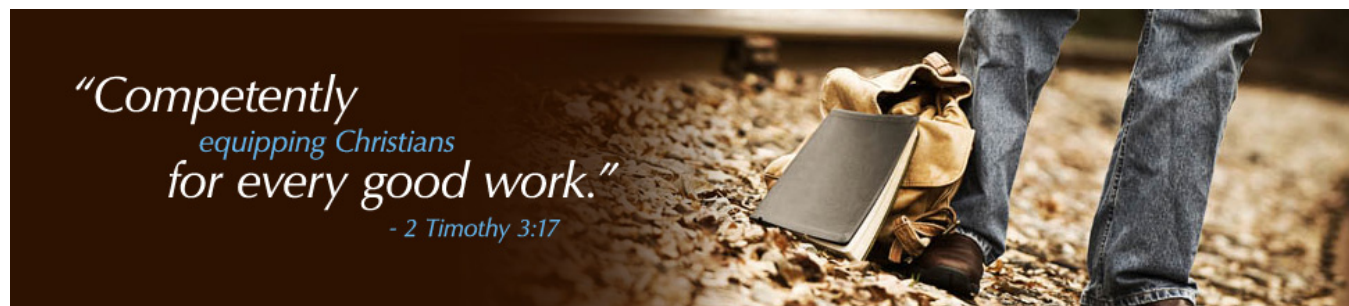


# Nine effective ways to disciple your husband while submitting to him

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One of the wife's primary responsibilities in her marriage is to counsel her husband. She is the number one *sanctifying-agent* in her husband's life. Nobody knows more about her husband than she does.

In order to disciple any person well you must know them well. Who knows your husband better than you do? You have seen him on his best days and you have experienced him on his worst days.

The things he does to keep others from knowing the real him are more apparent to you. He may put his best foot forward in the public domain, but you are aware of *both of his feet*.

Though you may not know all there is to know about him, you are the most *inside* person in his world. One of the advantages the LORD has, which makes Him so effective in His care for us, is His knowledge of us (Psalm 139:1-4; Hebrews 4:12-13).

You don't know what the LORD knows about your husband, but apart from Him, you know more than anyone else. This gives you an advantage when it comes to discipling him.

## **Equal and subordinate**

Some people in our culture have confused biblical submission. The implication of their teaching is the wife is inferior to the husband. There is nothing in God's Word that would support this notion.

A better view of a wife's role in the marriage is like the role of Jesus in the Trinity. He is coequal with God as far as His person is concerned, but He is submitted to the Father as far as His role is concerned.

This is a fair analogy for the wife. She is equal with her husband. He has nothing on her that would make him better than her. But when it comes to her role in the marriage, she is subordinate to him.

This should not be an odd way to think about roles and relationships. It is similar to your employer, if you have one. Your employer is no better than you are, but you are submitted to him/her.

It's the same for children. I am not better than or more superior than my children, though I am the leader of my children. I do not view them as inferior. They are children made in the image of God and I respect them for this (Genesis 1:27, 9:6; James 3:9).

This kind of thinking is a core belief to the pro life movement. Babies in the womb have the full dignity of humanness as well as image bearing. They are respected, loved, and honored just as much as any other human.

## **Make a disciple**

Roles and relationships do not negate each other. This makes the wife coequal with her husband, which is important when it comes to a proper world view of discipleship.

Assuming you and your husband are believers, then it is your responsibility to bring biblical care to him. He is your brother. He needs your discipleship care because he struggles with sin. (See Romans 7:21-25; 1 John 1:7-10)

*If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. – Matthew 18:15 (ESV)*

If he is not your brother, meaning he is not a believer, then he needs your evangelistic care. Either way, he needs you speaking into his life. He is not insulated from sin.

We are to go into all the world making disciples as we go (Matthew 28:19-20). The first and closest concentric circle of people you can influence with the Gospel is your spouse. Nobody is easier to make contact with and nobody has given you more insight into their life.

## **Leading from behind**

The first thing you will have to come to terms with is your responsibility to disciple him. Because you are subordinate to him, you will have to lead him from behind.

This is not an unusual context. In fact, it's more common than you might be aware. It's a normal discipleship approach to lead people without them being fully aware they are being led.

If you have to tell people you are leading them or act like you're leading them, then your leadership model is already broken. Leading others does not have to feel like being in front demanding they follow you. Yelling at, while waving people forward creates robot followers, not mature Christians.

It may be helpful for you to make a distinction between leading and leadership. Leading can be narrowly defined as an assigned task that expects followers to follow for the accomplishment of an expectation, e.g., a teacher might single out a child to lead the group to the cafeteria.

Leadership is more comprehensive and nuanced than this. It does not always mean being in front. Jesus led by washing people's feet (John 13:1-17). He led by giving His life to others (Mark 10:45). He taught a counter-intuitive leadership model (Matthew 20:16).

Some people only see leading in a single-dimensional kind of way. It's the painted faced squadron leader taking the hill with his loyal troops scrambling up behind him. This is a myopic and potentially skewed view of leadership.

I can't help but wonder how many Christian women realize the leadership power they possess. How many of them know how to leverage their leadership ability in the lives of their husbands?

It seems if they have any view of leadership at all, it is the either/or view that our culture believes: I'm either in charge of you or I'm submitted to you. This is the *Eve view* of leadership—I will dominate or become a doormat.

This creates *leadership competition* within the marriage. The husband is fighting with his wife for the *leadership* (wrongly defined) of the home. If he does this poorly, which he will, then his wife will fight back because she does not want to be treated poorly.

Upon feeling his wife's resistance, the husband ratchets up his efforts to dominate her. If he is less tenacious, he will acquiesce and abdicate. Either way, he will lose: his wife will either fight him toe-to-toe or she will disrespect him for being a wus.

The Bible does not teach these unbiblical manifestations of leadership. That's our competitive culture speaking, not God's Word. If you want to be a biblical leader for your husband, then please consider these nine suggestions.

## **Nine ways to disciple your husband**

**Get a burden** – (Galatians 6:1) Your husband is caught in sin. What I mean here is that he is not entirely sanctified. The Bible does not teach sinless perfection, which means your husband has sin struggles like you and me.

If you don't have a burden for your husband's sanctification, then you will miss out on the opportunities to help him in his sanctification. If your marriage is more about what you can get out of it rather than what you can put into it, then you are not leading well.

- Are you willing to set aside what you want for what he needs?

**Pray for him** – (1 Corinthians 1:4) I know; I know. I'm a Christian so I'm supposed to add prayer to the list of things a person should do to help someone. Yes, prayer is a great way to access the Trinity on behalf of the sanctification of your husband. Maybe the LORD will change him and maybe you should ask Him to change him. So pray.

While I mean prayer for that reason, what I'm really thinking about is how Paul prayed for the Corinthians. Paul spent time thanking God for the Corinthians. I want you to spend time thanking God for your husband.

If you don't have affection for the person you want to help, then the help you're going to offer may blow up on you. Paul had extravagant affection for the Corinthians, which paved the way for him to correct them.

- Do you have extravagant affection for your husband?

**Model your goal** – (Philippians 4:9) Write out on a piece of paper the things you would like for your husband to become. Here are a few examples: humble, servant, encourager, respectful, loving, kind, gentle, and passionate for God.

I'm sure you can add to the list. If not, just these few things will make your marriage sing. A core tenet of biblical leadership is to become the person you want others to be.

To think otherwise is hypocritical and destructive to any relationship. To expect or demand someone to be what you are not is wrong on so many levels. To lead well is to show them what to become by your other-centered, God-honoring example (Ephesians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

- Are you a clear biblical example of what you want him to become?

**Win him with encouragement** – (Ephesians 4:29) Make sure your words have a building up effect rather than a corrupting, tearing down effect. A word fitly spoken can transform your world and one not fitly spoken can destroy it (Proverbs 25:11).

You have power in your words. You can draw your husband to you and Christ by what you say or you can push him farther away. One of the most effective assessment questions you can ask in this area is, "What do you experience more from me: my encouragement or my displeasure?"

If you want to lead your husband well, then be courageous and grace-filled enough to check your blind spots. Ask him about his experience with you.

- Are you an encourager?

**Make it easy** – (Genesis 3:7) Your husband is a proud, self-reliant person who does not want to show weakness. I know this because I am one. We men are wired to be strong and impenetrable. Throw in a little sin and what you get is a person who does not want to reveal his flaws to anyone, especially to his wife.

He wants to impress you, which makes your condemnation and criticism of him more acute. Perhaps he has given up on impressing you. This is not hopeless, it just means you have more *leadership work* to do.

One of the most effective things the LORD does to win us to Him is by making it crystal clear that He is for us (Romans 8:31). The more your husband knows you are *for him*, the more you will be able to disciple him.

- Ask your husband if he thinks you are for him.

**Pick your spots** – (Proverbs 15:1) Be careful about confronting him head-on or when you are angry. This is unwise and unhelpful. Know your audience. Find *non-fight times* to talk to your husband.

The moment of your disappointment is probably not the best time to talk about what is wrong with him. You're more than likely going to say it the wrong way, which will only exacerbate an already negative situation.

Find a vulnerable time to talk to him. These are those moments when he's not as defensive and you're not as disappointed. It could be when you are already talking in a civil manner and you feel his receptivity to what you are saying.

- Do you have self-control, which governs the timing of your communication?

**Don't be manipulated** – (John 2:24-25) Sometimes a husband can become defensive by resorting to manipulative tactics. He will do this to throw his wife off the scent of his destructive ways.

Rather than owning his sin when she confronts him, he begins to blame, justify, or make excuses for his actions. If the wife is *manipulate-able*, she will buy what he is selling. This will cause her to be double-minded (James 1:5-8).

When she is away from him, she will see his actions clearly. When she gets within his manipulative orbit, she loses discernment. She gets lost in his noise and her mind becomes muddled. Some women struggle more with this than others.

If you can be easily muddled, then you need to fixate on what the problems are with your husband and your marriage. While you want to hold your assessments loosely (humbly), you don't want to hold them so loosely that you're double-minded about what is happening.

It may be wise to seek counsel about your marriage. Another perspective could clear up the fog, while giving you someone you can go to when your mind becomes cloudy.

- Are you easily manipulated?

**Be a matchmaker** – (1 Corinthians 15:33) You should not have to help your husband alone. Though you are his primary discipler, you are not his only discipler.

Begin praying about a male friend who can come alongside him to help him. Build community. This could also quicken the process of sanctification. The typical husband will open up quicker to a third party he does not know before he will open up to his wife.

- Who is a guy your husband may be willing to open up to?

**Find community** – (Proverbs 11:14) It's also imperative you have your community to help you as you help your husband. You don't want to be alone either. Your local church should be the best place for you to find friends to come alongside you.

If you live in a place where that is not possible, then I appeal to you to jump into our community. We have a network of friends who are more than willing to help you in this great adventure of *husband discipleship*. You can learn more about that [here](#).

- Who is caring for your soul?

**Written by Rick Thomas**

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In the early '90's he earned a BA in Theology. Later he earned a BS in Education. In 1993 he was ordained into ministry and in 2000 he graduated with a MA in Counseling. In 2006 he was recognized as a Fellow with a nationally recognized counseling group.

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