

I. Introduction

- A. Ignorance is not Bliss. The goal of this two-part series is to confront the unhealthy non-biblical applications and expressions of relational dynamics in the home and in the church. We're going to address headship, submission, and spiritual covering, and identify healthy biblical ways these themes are walked out. Over the years I have seen, and been a part of, so many unhealthy, unbiblical, and even evil dynamics as a result of misunderstanding these themes. In almost every case, these themes were done in a sincere desire to honor God's ways and His word but in our ignorance, it only brought pain and brokenness.

Where ignorance concerning healthy relationships is present, unhealthy dynamics and eventual abuse are inevitable. In other words, individuals in unhealthy relationships willingly participate in them because they don't know any different, and many times do not see it as unhealthy. When the dynamic of religious conviction is present, ignorance and abuse is compounded; irrational and extremely wicked behavior is allowed and sometimes even praised.

- B. Health - I want us all to consider relational health through this series in the same way that we would view physical health. Within the study of physical health, there is a large spectrum of definitions, practices, and thoughts of what ideal health looks like. However, no matter what definition or camp of beneficial physical health you are in, you can agree that there is agreement across the board when it comes to practices or ideologies that are massively unhealthy. In the same way, I want to focus mostly on the massively unhealthy practices and ideologies that accompany these themes.
- C. Cultural versus Biblical - When it comes to these themes in particular, I believe that there is a disparity between what is practiced and accepted as proper expression and understanding and what is biblical. I also believe that this is a systemic issue in the church in general rather than a problem only in certain denominations.
- D. This is about YOU - When there is teaching on matters of personal behavior and godliness within relationships, it is very easy to apply what's being said to everyone but yourself. Please do not do that during this series. If I teach something that convicts you then please respond to it. You can only change you; it may or may not convict the person you wish it would.

1. Calling out Abuse - As we identify righteous characteristics of relationships, and roles within those relationships, we will inevitably identify deficiencies in those we are in relationship with. Because we are all imperfect humans, we want to address these deficiencies with grace, understanding, and through the confidence of deep friendship. However, if through this series you find yourself identifying with some of the abusive dynamics we will address, I would urge you to deal with it immediately by talking about them with the individual, if appropriate, or a trusted friend or leader.

II. Biblical Survey of Themes

- A. Headship - Speaking of Husbands to their wives, headship is used as a metaphor to implicate the husband as chief, master, or lord over his wife. It is hard to hear the meaning of this word and not picture some evil or unrighteous dynamic. There is no doubt that this word implies a form of authority. However, what type of authority and how it is used must be understood. We must remind ourselves that there is no unrighteousness or oppression with God. What we need to use for our leadership model is the headship of the Father over the Son and the headship of Jesus over the Church to understand how this is to be walked out practically. (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22, 4:15; 5:23)
- B. Submission - The word “submission” also carries very negative connotations in our culture. However, the Greek word translated, “submit” simply means, “to yield control and yield to another's admonishment or advice.” The very idea of yielding implies coming from a place of strength and having a free choice. (Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 2:11-14, 5:5-7)
- C. Spiritual Covering - This term is used to imply a form of spiritual protection from demonic influence and positioning for blessing. This idea is usually accompanied by some form of submission to authority (husbands or papal) which then positions you to be “covered”. There is no explicit verse in the bible where this idea is mentioned and the term “spiritual covering” is also foreign to the scripture. It is clear, however, that adherence to the principles in scripture concerning headship, authority, and submission in our relationships is spiritually righteous and life-giving. Ignoring or resisting them is unrighteous and unhealthy. With this in mind, when or if we use the term “spiritual covering” it biblically speaks of a

righteous healthy relational environment that fosters life in God according to His design.

III. Marriage Dynamics

- A. Husbands - There is no confusion or debate concerning the biblical truth that husbands carry the responsibility and authority of headship. The debate arises in the practicals of what that means and how it is walked out in relational practicals in the marriage. Thankfully, we have some very clear guidelines to this question through Jesus's example of how He walks out the role of headship as the head over the church.
1. Jesus as Head - According to scripture, Jesus' headship over the church speaks of an authority or responsibility to love, nourish, selflessly serve, cherish, protect, provide, and encourage. (Eph. 5:22-29; Col. 1:18-23)
 2. A careful prayerful study of how Jesus walks out His authority as head of the church has nothing to do with being given authority or responsibility to have the final say on decisions concerning finances, child rearing, jobs, or place of residence.
- B. Wives - Wives are called to submit (yield control, and yield to their advice and encouragement) and offer respect towards their husbands, not because husbands are so awesome, but because God says it's going to create a healthy life-giving relationship. (Col 3:18; Eph. 5:22,33)
1. In every instance, the reason why God insists upon male headship is because God created Adam first and then Eve. Eve was given to Adam as a priceless gift and helpmate or helper. The original Hebrew translated helper" speaks of the level of support God gives to his people in battle. (Ps. 33:20) It is of note that almost all translations of 1 Cor. 11:3 tell us that the head of every woman is man. In other words, there is to be a headship responsibility given to men towards all women to protect, provide, selflessly serve, and encourage them.
- C. Unhealthy Relationships in Marriage - As stated earlier, the signs or practices of what the bible teaches as unhealthy or dysfunctional in marriages are universal. If you find yourself walking any of these things out in your marriage, or have friends in these types of situations, you need to make a priority of seeking counseling and/or make changes.

1. Misogynistic/Misandry premise or undertone - The hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women (Misogyny) or men (Misandry)
2. Patriarchal/Matriarchal premise or undertone - Characteristic or belief that the control of all systems and government is best suited for a particular gender because the other gender is too weak or flawed to be trusted.
3. The husband or the wife is the primary decision-maker on almost everything - There is a difference between a partner who always defers because of a laid-back personality type and a partner who is made to feel like they do not have the right, or fears to contradict the other.
4. The husband or the wife alone controls the finances - There are many healthy marriages in which one partner takes a stronger responsibility of financial management but that is very different from control. In a controlled environment, money is granted or allowed by one partner to the other; the controlling partner is free to spend while the other must seek permission or be granted a certain set amount.
5. The husband and the wife's finances are kept separate - This system of financial management is very common today and highly unbiblical. The very definition of marriage is the two becoming one in everything. His money, business, and possessions of any kind become hers and vice versa.
6. Love and/or respect is earned rather than given freely as unto the Lord - A very common unhealthy and highly damaging relationship dynamic is when a partner feels justified in their withholding of love or respect based upon the perceived deficiencies of their partner. Biblical marriage is the unmerited unconditional love and respect given from one partner to the other based upon honoring God's ways and the covenant they made to each other.
7. Threats of Divorce or aspects of Divorce as Manipulation - Unfortunately it is all too common that the spoken threat of divorce is a normal part of marital relationships. It's easy to go there during marital strife; however, it is very unhealthy and extremely damaging to your relationship. I have also seen it weaponized as a form of manipulative control. In extreme

cases of manipulation, leveraging of time or custody of children, financial, or residential deprivation is also used.

8. Sexual withholding - For most spouses, when there are unhealthy dynamics in the marriage, sexual desire and drive is absolutely going to be affected. This is normal marital dynamics. However, when sex is withheld in a manipulative way it is unhealthy. Sex should never be leveraged as some kind of reward to be earned based upon behavior or merit or withheld as a form of control.

D. Abuse in Marriage - Abusive tendencies are very serious and need to be exposed, addressed, and accountability put in place. However, when it comes to ongoing abusive patterns in a marriage I believe an immediate separation and very intense and ongoing counseling and accountability is the only way forward.

1. Physical - Physical abuse is deliberately aggressive or violent behavior by one person toward another that results in bodily injury.
2. Verbal - Verbal abuse involves using words to name-call, bully, demean, frighten, intimidate, or control another person. This includes overt verbal abuse such as yelling, screaming, or swearing.
3. Sexual - Threats or actions of unwanted or non mutual sexual contact or forced sex.
4. Gas Lighting - Psychological manipulation of a person, usually over an extended period that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts.
5. Isolation - The controlling of a spouse's social activity: whom they see, whom they talk to, where they go and any other method to limit their access to others. It may also include limiting access to information, including the internet, books, or television.