

Woman Among the Pillars

In his final chapter, Stu takes some time to look at what the woman's role is as she tries to deal with this mate who is struggling to keep his 4 pillars in balance and aligned. In the struggle between two people to live together in harmony, there must also be balance and alignment. Husbands and wives are friends too, but their relationship is different than the one they share with friends outside of the marriage vows. There needs to be a dominant role played by one of the spouses in a marriage that doesn't need to exist in other friendly relationships. This is not a dominating role - just a prominent role so that leadership can be exercised. Without leadership, the marriage breaks down into bickering as each tries to assert that dominant role. That in turn leads to bitterness, resentment, and mistrust. And that's where Stu quotes from the Book of Proverbs:

An excellent wife, who can find?

For her worth is far above jewels.

*The heart of her husband **trusts** in her...*

*She does him **good** and not **evil***

All the days of her life.

Proverbs 31:10-12

What makes a marriage work and prosper more than anything else is *trust*. If the man is failing to protect and provide for his family, mistrust enters the marriage bed. The wife may feel the need to fill the void in leadership and so she goes into competition with her husband for that leadership role. This undermines his trust in her because he doesn't feel like he's getting her support. He feels emasculated. And yet it began with her mistrust of him because she believes he failed her and can't be relied on to do what is right. The vicious cycle begins.

Women are rarely weak, and so the challenge for the wife in a marriage is knowing how to exercise her strength. In my first email I suggested that submission, not subservience, was absolutely vital to a healthy marriage. We often hear that *mutual* submission is needed, but Stu says that would be a fantasy by definition. In a war, the sergeant is often bigger and stronger than his commanding officer - and yet he submits to his officer's leadership. Why? Because he understands that if he doesn't, there is no discipline, no leadership, and the resulting chaos will lead to disaster for everyone.

Submission is putting your personal agenda to the side until the primary mission is fulfilled. It is a hyphenated word: sub-mission. It is not a commentary on personal worth. The officer isn't a better man. The officer's role is not to give orders and demand respect. It is to give direction with the purpose of ensuring that the mission is completed successfully. By doing that well, he earns respect - and trust. It isn't his due. The sergeant willingly serves his officer, and sacrifices himself to ensure the mission is completed. What's the mission?

In a marriage, the mission is to live together in harmony, unity, and singleness of purpose despite the fact that there are multiple people involved. Why is that the mission? I'm going to bring Scripture to bear here: because it is supposed to be a reflection of God, the third partner in every marriage. Marriage is ordained in the Bible. It is based on the trinity of the Godhead. The trinity has harmony, unity, and singleness of purpose despite the multiplicity of persons found in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even though Jesus Christ was God incarnate, he lived his life in submission to his father's will - "not my will, but yours." That's what he prayed on that last night. Was he weak? No. Was he inferior? No. He had the strength to submit to his father in heaven and not to rise up in rebellion or competition. He had a mission to complete - he laid down his rights and his life to fulfill it.

"Yeah," you might say, "but he had every confidence that his father knew what he was doing." If I were a woman, I'd be tempted to say, "It would be easy to submit to my husband if he were like God - but this man that is supposed to be heading up my household doesn't know his left foot from his right. I've got to run baby-sitting services all day long, every day. You don't know what I go through..." Well, it *isn't* easy to submit to God either, or we wouldn't be caught in sin - and all of us are caught in sin, men and women alike. Second, the household isn't mine and it isn't my wife's. It is God's.

When we speak of mutual submission, we're talking about both husband and wife submitting to God. We need to submit to God when we find it nearly impossible to submit to our spouse. We each need to set aside our own needs for the moment so that we can meet our spouse's needs. The one who would be greater must serve the other. *That's* where the strength comes from in submission. Doing what is right, not what is easy.

For the next few days I'm going to explore what Stu has to say about the image of a God-bound marriage. It does *not* mean that the husband gets to win even when he screws up, and the wife has to accept it. That's not it at all. Stu teaches both the husband and the wife **how to exercise power wisely in a marriage** - and both the husband and wife have a lot of power to exercise, for good or for evil. There's a choice involved.