

**HEADS AND HELPERS, PART 1 (IDENTITY, 3 OF 5)**

<https://fiercemarriage.com/heads-and-helpers-part-1-identity-3-of-5>

[00:00:00]

**Ryan:** Now there are a few topics that are as relevant today as what we're talking about in this episode. And that is headship, helpership, if that's even a thing, the head, and the helper. What are the biblical grounds for gender roles within the marriage institution? So if you're here listening to this, you're in for a lively episode. We've done a ton of research and we hope to distill it down into about 40 minutes. So we will see you on the other side.

[00:00:30] <intro>

**Selena:** Welcome to the Fierce Marriage podcast where we believe that marriage takes a fierce tenacity that never gives up and refuses to give in.

**Ryan:** Here we'll share openly and honestly about all things marriage—

**Selena:** Sex—

**Ryan:** Communication—

**Selena:** Finances—

**Ryan:** Priorities—

**Selena:** Purpose—

**Ryan:** And everything in between.

**Selena:** Laugh, ponder, and join in our candid, gospel-centered conversations. This is Fierce Marriage.

[00:01:02] <podcast begins>

**Selena:** Why do you lie, liar? *[both chuckles]*

**Ryan:** I misspoke. We're going to try to do it in two episodes. *[Selena chuckles]* This one is going to be about 40 minutes. And the way we're going to divide the episodes is this time we're going to talk about... we were initially going to talk about husband roles and then next episode talk about wife roles.

And as we're doing the research and as we're compiling our notes, we realized we really have to talk about this from a biblical doctrinal standpoint first and lay a really solid common ground so that we can, I guess, parse through and understand scriptures correctly, faithfully and-

**Selena:** Yeah. It's really hard to separate the two. When you're talking about the roles of a wife, yes, we could have a whole episode on that. But I think for our initial time, we need to talk about them simultaneously.

**Ryan:** Yes.

**Selena:** So that's what we're going to do. We're going to lay the groundwork, dive into the Bible, dive into scripture, get our understanding correct around the idea of roles, because believe it or not, there are people that are way smarter than us, that know the Bible, preach the word, and they are divided on some of these things.

**Ryan:** We're going to try to be charitable.

**Selena:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Ryan:** We're not going to set up straw men and just knock them over. We're really trying to look at scripture and let the scripture read us. And taking both sides of this debate, and we'll get into what the debate actually is here in a minute, but then represent those carefully the best versions of each argument and then go with whatever scripture shows us. So that's the first episode.

The next one will be, then what are the implications of that for me as a husband, for Selena as a wife, and therefore you as a listener, if you're a husband, or you as a listener if you're a wife? So that's coming up. But before we do that, let's do some housekeeping.

If you haven't yet, please do leave a rating and review, do follow this podcast. *[Ryan chuckles] [Selena laughs]* I think that's the thing. I can never get it right.

**Selena:** These young people.

**Ryan:** We don't want you to miss anything, you guys. You know what? It's important to invest in your marriage. Sometimes we think our marriage is, by default, just going to flourish. But how many couples can tell you that is not the case? You need to invest into your marriage. And this podcast is one small way that you can do that. We'll keep the content coming. We pray that it continues to bless you.

So like, follow do all that stuff with the podcast, leave a rating, if it has bless you, leave a review. That means a ton to us. It's one way to say thanks if you want to do that. If you don't want to say thanks, you know, if you want to say it in your car by yourself, that's fine. We'll take that to no pressure. *[Selena chuckles]*

The other way you can say thanks is by partnering with us. This is the way that we support our family. This is the way that God has called us to be about—His work. So one of the ways that we are paid is through Patreon. And that's just the easy way of saying it. So go to patreon.com. There's lots of benefits there. But if you want to be on mission with us to 5, 10 bucks a month. It doesn't take a lot, but it helps a ton. But if you can't do that, no worries, we'll keep the content coming. You're more than welcome here.

**Selena:** You can always pray for us all the time.

**Ryan:** Prayer too, yes. Thank you very much. That's it for now. I just want to fast forward through all that so that we can get into this conversation because we have a lot of ground to cover.

**Selena:** We do. It's pretty exciting. I think you and I personally have come into more clarity around this idea of headship and being a helper because we were talking a lot in the car yesterday, and even our understanding and how we've kind of defaulted into these roles, I feel like the Lord has been so faithful in showing us where our faults have been.

In our research, this topic has been extremely, I don't know... it's caused me to dive deeper and to understand more accurately.

**Ryan:** Yeah. Because we've not talked about this on the podcast.

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** We've alluded to it. Of course, it comes through. Kind of the doctrine or theology behind all this comes through. And here's why we haven't talked about it. It's not because we're afraid. I think we wanted to do it justice and we wanted to take the time to the research. We had this identity series and we finally we were committed to doing it. So we couldn't back out because I probably put in 10 hours of research into this topic.

**Selena:** Yeah. We split it into two episodes. [00:05:00] It is in a series format. And I think that the Lord knew that this is the time that it needed to happen. There are other reasons behind the scenes that have affirmed our time for talking

about this. So here we are ready to talk, ready to discuss this beautiful design of headship of being a helper and what that looks like.

**Ryan:** And the other reason is, it's obviously... listener, you probably know this. But this is a hot topic culturally speaking. It grates on a lot of people because of the distortions, of creation, of how... you know, even back to the garden, and we'll talk about all this, how it has been distorted over humanity. *[chuckles]* So it's a very sensitive topic, especially nowadays with our modern sensibilities. So that's why it does take the time to be nuanced. Like I said, we're not afraid of it, we just want to make sure we take time to address it.

Now, in the name of that, I want to be very clear about the scope of this conversation, and that the purpose of our discussion is strictly, in a summary, confined to marriage. Okay? Not because we don't have convictions around the complementarian versus egalitarian kind of debate, headship, helpership. Even within the church we have opinions about that stuff. And that's not our opinions. We'd like to think and we believe they're rooted in Scripture. But we want to limit our scope here now to the Fierce Marriage Podcast to the marriage piece to that conversation, namely headship, and helpership in the home, and complimentary roles in the home, in a marriage.

**Selena:** In other words, we're not going to talk about church leadership and men and women and their roles there. So that's off the table, this is on the table. We are excited. I'm excited to get on board with this. I mean, we've just had such good conversations, I've really enjoyed talking to you. *[laughs]*

**Ryan:** So that's what today's going to be. There's going to be another conversation, and we're going to hopefully edify our listeners. And this is an extremely important conversation for this reason: our understanding of biblical manhood and womanhood, all right, sometimes those terms can be grating, too. So just bear with us, we're going to use those terms because they're the easiest to use: biblical manhood and womanhood.

How you understand that is critical to not just in our marriage, but how we live out our daily lives, especially as families within the Great Commission through the activities of spousehood and parenting. And it's our conviction that if we can't get this core component of marriage right, that it can have lasting adverse effects on our marriage and on the family, and eventually on the church, because it does begin to erode.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** So our scope, again, it's not just our opinions, it's what does the Bible have to say about this issue in the space of marriage? And because it's our identity

issue, we're namely speaking to what is your identity as a husband or what is your identity as a wife? Meaning, what are you called to that is unique to not just being a good Christian, right?

So if you say, well, husband should be loving and patient, and empathetic well, yeah, so should a wife. So what makes a husband uniquely different, what makes a wife uniquely different that only a wife can do, only a husband can do? And what does the Bible have to say about that?

So let's start here. What are the big questions that are being asked? Selena, what are the big questions? I don't know what. *[chuckles]*

**Selena:** Rhetorical. I thought you were going to continue. Well, around this topic, we are asking what are the responsibilities of men in marriage that are unique to men, like you mentioned before? What are the responsibilities of women in marriage? And who is assigned to these responsibilities? Those are big questions. *[chuckles]* I'm processing like cultural lies and voices, and then scripture and all that. So that's why I paused.

What does scripture say, you know, our household role is outlined in Scripture, and to what extent? These are again questions that we're asking today, we're going to talk about. Again, what does culture say? And does it align with Scripture? Oh, man. How important is this issue? Or what is at stake? And I think you mentioned that before. And why does this matter? Why does it matter that we talk about these roles? Don't we just know them? And don't we just get along? And can't we just move on? Right?

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** No. What is our view, you and me, Ryan and Selena? Selena and Ryan? *[both laughs]*

**Ryan:** That will be-

**Selena:** This is at the end.

**Ryan:** We're going to get to that. But we want to address this and look at scriptures as unbiasedly, if that's a word, as possible. So I guess the question now is, what scriptures are we going to look at? As you can imagine, we've got about 10 significantly long passages here.

Now, listener, if this is something you want to learn more about, you're going to have to do some research on your own. There are amazing resources out

there. Our encouragement to you is do that, but do it with a heart of seeking what Scripture says not what you hope it says. Does that make sense?

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** And that's what we're trying to do today. So I think we're going to hang our hat on kind of the quintessential Ephesians passage today, [00:10:00] and we're going to use that as our roadmap, as our framework as we talk through this. So let's read that. Let's read Ephesians 5:15 through chapter 6:4. All right. So it's long. Let me go ahead and read that and then we will begin to parse through.

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband"

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.' Fathers, do not provoke

your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

That's a long passage. And the reason why we didn't just confine it to the point essential wives submit to your husbands, husbands love your wives is because there's context.

**Selena:** Context matters. Context matters.

**Ryan:** Context matters. And there are bits and pieces to be gleaned. And so if we're going to understand what Paul means and therefore what God means, because we believe the Holy Spirit was illumining Paul's pen, so to speak, as he wrote this, then we need to know what's happening around this text.

The first thing that jumped out is this first part-

**Selena:** Sorry, before you jump into the first things and all of that, I think we need to understand that the heart behind the whole of this passage is that there are specific ways we are called to respond and function in different relationships. So he's calling out husbands love your wives, wives submit, children, honor your parents, right? So you see all these kind of directives being thrown out in there.

Also there's an emphasis on this passage of how are we as believers caring for one another? And how are we serving one another? Again, that depends on the relationship. So children are called to honor their parents, wives are called to submit and husbands are called... So again, just seeing this overall passage of how are we caring for one another? How is the Lord instructing us as believers and saints to care for one another? How are we walking this out spiritually? Because the days are evil, because we are fighting against the flesh.

So just to kind of see that overall view of the instruction, I think, just opens the door for us to be able to get more granular and understand why these directives are important, and they're a function of each relationship.

**Ryan:** Family is a huge theme within the book of Ephesians. Not just the nuclear home or even the multi-generational family, but the family of God in Christ. Mainly the Gentiles have been brought into the fold and the implications of living that out. At one point, Paul is commending them for their love toward one another. This is in chapter 1. And then he turns the corner and he starts now contending for them because they still have a lot of maturity. Like they're still figuring stuff out.

And so yes, there's a family theme here, but it kind of comes to a crescendo here in chapters 5 and 6. Mainly, this is the implication of the fact that you're part of the family of God. Now this is how you live within the family unit, husbands and wives, parents and children. And even he goes into bondservants and things like that, which contextually is a very interesting thing to look at. But the first thing is going to grate on us here is this idea of submission. So I'm just going to dive right into this.

**Selena:** Oh, goodness.

**Ryan:** To me, this is the linchpin for this whole entire debate. So their debate is this. You have on one side... again, we're talking about the context of marriage, but the debate bleeds into other areas of Christendom. [00:15:00] Namely the church.

So on the one side you have complementarianism, which is this idea that husband and wife, male and female are made in the image of God, they are of equal value worth, and importance, they are both valuable, and they are both to be regarded as such. They are equal, but they are different. They have different roles to play, they have different callings on their lives. This has not attached to their... you said it really well is that God didn't just think men are so great so he just gave them this particular role.

**Selena:** It's not an [inaudible]. It's not based on the nature of a man being a man, therefore he is going to be the leader because he's a man.

**Ryan:** We don't see that in scripture. We see that God has assigned to this, but we don't see that He did it because there is an innate value difference. It's not hierarchical. I want to get this out in the very beginning, is that this conversation is not about hierarchy. It's not about power. It's not about status. It is about order. It's about everything being on the same... At least not everything. But in these terms, male or female, husband and wife, they are the same value, but they are different in their calling, in their order. That's the complementarian side of it.

On the other side, we have egalitarianism. I'm just going to read this quote from Got Questions because I feel like it's very succinct. The broadest meaning of egalitarianism is that all people are inherently equal and ought to be treated as such, which complementarians would agree with that, too.

When used as a doctrinal term within Christianity, egalitarianism has a narrower meaning suggesting that God does not intend any distinctions between men and women in matters of spiritual leadership." In the home, I'm



adding this, or in the church. So that's egalitarianism. That there's no basis for differences in role is what an egalitarian would say.

That's laying out kind of the both sides of this. However, whichever side of that you fall on, we have to deal with this passage in Ephesians 5. And that's where this word "submit," I call it just the S word. It's a four-letter word, but it's not... People cannot stand this word "Submit." And I think it's only by God's grace that we can actually resign ourselves to it.

**Selena:** Right. And there's a few things here. I mean, when you take it in context, it is sandwiched between stronger commands that are directed at the church. There's submission to one another out of reverence for Christ. We are all called to submit. So the fact that a wife is called out to submit is not a call to inferiority or subordinating role. Right?

**Ryan:** Right. And I want you to get there, but this is why this is a linchpin. Because how you define the word submit, and I don't mean the dictionary definition, I mean, do you think it's a bad word or a good word? That's what I mean.

**Selena:** It's very telling, yes.

**Ryan:** That's going to tell you everything. Because what happens is, is we have this bad vision of submission that we think that it is just inherently a negative thing, because it means that someone else is bossing someone else around and the other person is cowering under their bossiness. That's a really kind of caricature of it.

And we can have experiences to that effect. You can come from a bad household where your father wasn't loving, or your mother wasn't even loving, or you have a boss that was bad, and you have this view of submission that it's just it's a bad thing. Now, Scripture doesn't give us that. So what happens is we end up reading into this issue our definition of submission.

So we believe that every significant misunderstanding of the biblical household and headship comes down to a misunderstanding of the biblical idea of submission. And it's the first stop. It's the first stop when seeking to faithfully parse through scripture on this matter. So submission scripturally speaking is not a bad thing.

We see that example in the Trinity, I mean, first and foremost. There's a heresy called eternal subordination of the son. We're not talking about that. But there is a sense in which in His humanity, Christ submitted Himself to the will of the Father, not because His will was different, but because He was under the headship of the Father.

Again, in Trinitarian terms, this is like Trinity 101. We talked about this.

**Selena:** Right. It's not hierarchy and stuff.

**Ryan:** There's no hierarchy. There's equality there. But they're different. The Father decrees, the Son carries out the decree, the Holy Spirit comes along-

**Selena:** The Son doesn't have another will to submit. Right?

**Ryan:** Right, exactly. And that's a beautiful thing.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** And so we see this even in terms that Christ gave us Himself. He says, "When I leave, I'll send a helper." Who's the helper? The Holy Spirit. That's also used for wives. Is helper a subservient term or is that a term...? To me, that's a term of I don't need help from somebody who knows less than me or who's weaker than me. I need help from somebody who knows more, and who's stronger than me. Therefore, God gave me Selena. *[both laughs]*

So it really does come down to this first major pitfall, which is how we look at, define, and resign ourselves to the definition of submission. One of the ways that that works itself out in this text, and Selena, feel free to jump in at any point if you feel like it, is in Ephesians 5.

I saw some commentators read it this way. They'll read that "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." So they go on and say, "Oh, so it's saying wives submit to your husbands, but also husbands submit to your wives, because you're submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

**Selena:** Nowhere in the Bible does it actually say that.

**Ryan:** It doesn't actually say that. But then they'll go into the Greek and say that this version of submit, headship didn't actually mean authority, it just meant something else. Which by the way, most Greek scholars will say that the most common use of this word that's used for headship means that there is some sort of authority there at play. But people will say, "No, wives submit to your husband, yes, but also a husband submits to his wife."

The problem with that approach is hermeneutically speaking—and that's a word for how you parse the text, how you read the text—you can't say that same stuff about... Okay, it goes on and says, "...even as Christ as the head of the church." So does that mean that Christ submits to the church? Does the

church submits to Christ? Does it mean that our children submit to the parents, but also the parents are supposed to submit to the children? That reading the text falls apart really quickly.

**Selena:** Exactly, exactly. I think I would like to quote Rachel Green Miller. She's the author of a newer book called "Beyond Authority and Submission: Women and Men in Marriage, Church, and Society." And she says that submission is a function or defined by the marriage relationship.

So again, when we're talking about this marriage relationship, the idea of submission is not a hierarchical control authority thing. She says also it is a voluntary submission of an equal. So Ryan and I are equal in personhood and value to God. But it's an order, right? It's an order. And it's something that I can do out of respect for my husband and in recognition of my ultimate Lord. I think [inaudible] said it's a voluntary yielding to another in love.

I love how they said that submission of a wife to her husband is not a subordinating or making her less than or inferior. It's a voluntary submission of an equal. So it is not being a doormat, and it is not trying to usurp, which is not submitting at all. But it's not just being a doormat. That's not what submission means.

So again, I can embrace this idea of submission because I have a right understanding of it and I have a husband who is pursuing and trying to understand and be obedient to his call as a husband to love me, which leads me to more joyful submission.

**Ryan:** So this is where it gets really hairy. I can just hear it now.

**Selena:** I know.

**Ryan:** You have a wife who says, "Well, my husband doesn't do those things. How can I submit to him when he very clearly has relegating his role?"

**Selena:** And in 1 Peter we have an answer to that. *[Ryan chuckles]*

**Ryan:** Are you going to read it or no?

**Selena:** I can. [inaudible] for me?

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

**Ryan:** We're getting into the weeds. We're going to talk about this a lot more in the next week's episode. But just as a quick sidebar, that's what it means. What Paul means when he says, "submit on your husband as unto the Lord," he means that even though your husband will fall short, do it in this nonsensical way because you're doing it out of obedience out of reverence for how I've created this relationship to function, because I care for you, I care for your husband's soul. Okay?

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** Again, we're getting ahead of ourselves. But then the husband love your wives. The call to love, you guys, is about as massive of a call as you can get.

**Selena:** It's also a call of submission as well.

**Ryan:** Submitting to the Lord.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** We'll leave that for next week. We're going to talk about the implications of these texts. Today I just want to work through some of the common pitfalls here so that we can hopefully get on the same page. And again, doing so with charity.

So we talked about the submission and why that's very tricky and how it's the linchpin. Again, let's recap. It's a linchpin because how we define submission is going to determine the rest of how we deal with this issue. If we let God's definition of submission be ours, I think we have an easier time.

**Selena:** We submit to God's idea of submission, and His body.

**Ryan:** Yes. And if we read into scripture, our version of it, we're going to have a really hard time with this. So we kind of have to leave that at the door. We have to [00:25:00] take on God's definition, the scriptural definition because we are working through scripture, now we can move forward. So that's the first pitfall.

The second one... I'm using this term hermeneutics. It is a term... I think it has to do with how you interpret scripture. So how we interpret this text or our approach to the text is going to determine how we view this issue.

So the egalitarian view requires a certain attitude when reading the text that is problematic, I would say, and is unsustainable for the entirety of Scripture. So here's an example. I'm going to use a quote by D. A. Carson. He says this: "In explaining away hard texts has a way of sidestepping what Scripture unambiguously, repeatedly, and clearly says by trying to locate the rationale in some alleged reconstruction of the background of, for example, 1 Timothy, or whatever it is instead of listening to what Scripture actually says on its own terms."

He cites then Isaiah 66. And I'll read that next. This does not feel like trembling before the Word of God." The verse Isaiah 66 says this. I'm just going to read it. "All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."

And so Carson is saying that this is not for you like trembling before the Word of God. It feels like a way of domesticating it. And then the long haul has massive repercussions down the road. That's what we're trying to say. Like we take a hard passage like 1 Timothy, which is more I think to deal with the life of the church, or take, like I said, with Ephesians 5 and you read it and you say, well, it's actually a mutual submission. So it's equal in that way. Well, that has a way of domesticating the text. And that puts us in a place over scripture. Right? It puts us in a place above scripture.

So here's another example. Ephesians 5:21 verses following. Some would say that the context there is that Paul was appending—okay, we heard this debate—Paul was appending the Greco Roman household norm, and he didn't mean what it actually says. That he was actually saying something else. That by saying, "wives submit to your husbands, husbands love your wives," Paul wasn't saying those things. He was actually saying that the way the Greco Roman tradition works, we're going to turn that on its head. But they'd argue that Paul isn't giving the Ephesians instructions that are universal and timeless. Instead, they would say that it's something that's only applicable to them.

So there's some big problems with that. The first hermeneutic problem with that is that while you might be able to justify those readings, because a lot of times you'll come to those sorts of readings by looking at history and looking at the context and say, well, in the Greco Roman culture, this was the norm for the household and Paul must have been referencing that.

And there are cases when that is true. But when we read that, we take that culture and read it into the text, especially when it goes against the other parts of the Bible, it's speculation. It doesn't allow the text to sit on its own. And

that truth cannot be known unless we read it into the text. So we have to go find Greco Roman tradition, read it into the text, and then interpret our meaning.

Now, there are times when that's helpful, but in this case, I don't think that's the most likely faithful interpretation of the text. So we end up with something that's from outside the Bible and then we read it into scripture. And it decimates the whole of the Bible because we're now looking at all of culture around the times when scriptures were written, and then putting those meanings into the text. Again, there are times when that's appropriate. But there are times when it's just inappropriate. So that's the first kind of big hermeneutical problem.

The second one is that the reading that women submit and men submit. I talked about this earlier. It applies to the same. That's unsustainable. So I already mentioned that. But you wouldn't say that because the church submits to Christ therefore Christ should also submit to the church.

Now, Christ does serve the church, Christ does lead as a servant, but He's still the head. Parents don't submit to their children, and so on and so forth.

And then there's another piece where it's a problem reading the text like that—I'm talking about Ephesians 5—is just the argumentation. I guess the argument goes that Paul was somehow reversing the Greco-Roman norm. And I just don't see how that reverses the Greco-Roman norm. Women were already seen as lesser citizens.

**Selena:** We were listening to a podcast, and it wasn't kind of a debate, just conversations around this. And what the person was saying was that the Greco Roman codes-

**Ryan:** For the household.

**Selena:** ...for the household were written by men and for men. And so in this passage, I think Paul addresses the wives first, which can suggest that he is kind of flipping those household codes on [00:30:00] their head. She was actually equating to the gospel being the great equalizer. Like women can't be Christians because they're women. And no, you are a woman, you are a value, you are of equal importance. So he was actually saying that just by him addressing the women first, it can be suggested that he was trying to bring value to women in a-

**Ryan:** Which on its own, I don't have a problem with that, because you read that in Galatians 3:20. They're neither male nor female. That's saying exactly what

she wants it to say. It's saying that there's not a distinction. Now these arbitrary wrong kind of power structures are erased because Christ came once and for all. A Gentile, Jew alike; male, female alike; slave, master alike, all those lines were completely obliterated.

But that's a salvific thing. That's not saying there's no differences between men and women. It's not saying there's no differences between nations, between Gentiles and Jews. It's just saying that when it comes to your salvation, when it comes to your relationship with God Himself, there are none of those things.

**Selena:** Which this is an identity piece. We talked about that originally.

**Ryan:** So when she reads this Ephesians texts that way, I just can't help like... I like that conclusion, I just don't like that she try to get to it from Ephesians 5. Because Ephesians 5 is not about that, it's about the home. Reading into it that this is a Greco Roman jab, that's I think a reach. You're having to go too far. Whereas Paul he also reinforces these doctrines in other epistles.

In other words, erroneous argumentation. So that's the first kind of big pitfall aside from the submission piece, the hermeneutical piece, is how we choose to read these things. People can fall into those categories, and they can maybe make those mistakes. That's not to say we haven't made any mistakes, but it just means that those are common.

The other one is authority. This is a big pitfall. What I mean by that is we sometimes, as people who read the Bible, we can approach it and we can sit above these difficult texts, specifically about things that we're intimately involved in. So as husbands and wives, especially this idea of submission, so we adopt away because we're sitting above it, we adopt a way of viewing scripture that says much about the kinds of Bible readers that we are. In other words, we think that scripture should bow to our authority, that it should explain itself to us.

**Selena:** Isn't this interesting? It's just a parallel Genesis 3. Again, does God really say that? Does He really not want...?" Like there's this question, right? And it's suggested also that the servant went to the wife and undermined the husband's headship and role. Yes, they're intimately involved with the Lord. They would walk in the presence, they'd be in the presence of God. And there was just this undistorted pure relationship with God that was not questioned, there was no pride.

And then the serpent comes in and starts appealing to them and starts undermining the authority, starts questioning, starts thinking, "Did He really

say that?" Like we read our Bible saying, "Is it really saying that? I don't know if this is what the text is really saying." Maybe that's a big jump and a big reach, but I found myself in those positions of reading the Bible and understanding that what I'm reading things into that are not there. And that's dangerous.

**Ryan:** I would just like to revisit Isaiah 66:2. "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." That attitude is the opposite of trembling at God's word and the opposite of being humble and contrite in spirit. Instead of saying, to the God of the universe, explain yourself. Or "God, you don't mean that because I don't like that. So you're going to mean something else."

That's a very precarious place to be. And that's an understatement. That's the understatement of the century. We do not sit above Scripture, scripture sits above us. Now, you may think that's a circular argument. But if we don't call scripture authoritative, we have nowhere to go. But if we do call it authoritative, we have every rich thing to be had that that can be found in the word of the living God who is Himself the embodiment of holiness, goodness, the Creator God has given us to us.

So this is the big question that it creates. Are we humble and contrite in spirit? That's a big question. Do we worship God and regard His word as authoritative, complete, and true? Or do we question God and worship ourselves, subjecting Scripture to our own sensibilities, and interpretational preferences?

It doesn't mean we stop studying the text. That's the big and important thing. It doesn't mean that we just take it blindly. There are things to understand about the text that [00:35:00] we don't get at face value. We keep studying it. But this means that we read scripture in search of God's truth, not confirmations of our own.

**Selena:** Right, right. It's definitely a heart orientation and an attitude towards scripture. And I think when we do come to an impasse, and we don't understand, I mean, here's where community comes in, here's where our pastors come in, here's where spiritual like mentors, people come in. And we can ask them the hard things, we can dice to Scripture. We know that God is faithful and true and clear and orderly. So we can trust that.

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** Again, just to kind of recap and bring this back around to our conversation, we're talking about biblical roles in the household underneath this huge theme of identity, of marriage, of the design and construction of the home



and these roles and why they are distinctive, and why they are purposed and why they're complimentary. So these are important things to be talking about and be questioning and be having in our mind as we're reading scripture.

**Ryan:** Again, our trajectory here is we want to finish going through some of these pitfalls. And then I'd like to just do a quick flyover on some of the key scriptural texts that we can look at, and then come out with a complete view on this.

Now, we've already said that we leaned toward the complementarian side. We believe that's scripturally founded, that's the most clear reading of the text. So we're hoping to get you there too, if you're wondering. So just stick with us even if you don't agree with us.

The next big pitfall—this is going to be the final one that we cover, and it is inflammatory—it's feminism and the fear of cultural critique. So there's this quote by G. K. Chesterton that I just love. He wrote in this essay called Social Reform Versus Birth Control.

**Selena:** Is there a date on this? Because I think that's so important.

**Ryan:** In the 60s. This has been the time of second wave feminism in Great Britain. So he's talking about birth control and associated science and the supposed, I guess, the social arguments for it, because it was a kind of a politicized thing back then. And here's what he said, "It is a birth control and that whole debate is mixed up with the muddled idea that women are free when they serve their employers, but slaves when they help their husbands. It is ignorant of the very existence of the real household where prudence comes by freewill and agreement."

So he's pushing back on that idea that women are free when they serve their employers, but they're slaves when they help their husbands. Of course, Chesterton is very cheeky. He's a lyricist of sorts. So he really hits the nail on the head.

So I would argue, and I think you would do too, that feminism, in lots of ways, was appropriate and needed back then. Particularly back in the 1800s, the late mid-1800s, around like when-

**Selena:** Egalitarian and complementarian Christians would agree on a lot of that stuff. Yes.

**Ryan:** I think we're going to take that as a-

**Selena:** Women needed to have the freedom to, you know, obviously to vote, to open a bank account, to not be asked when their period is before they get hired so that they don't hire somebody who's going to be pregnant. We laugh at that now but that was a reality for some of our family members probably.

**Ryan:** Yeah. And there's no biblical basis for women making different wages. There's no biblical basis for women not being able to vote. There's no biblical basis for any of that. Again, we're talking about what does the Bible say about roles in the Christian household? So feminism in lots of ways was good, because it righted some wrongs that biblically were out of line. That there was not this equality that we see the image of God in both men and women.

**Selena:** Right. Now, the problem is- *[laughs]*

**Ryan:** The problem is that sometimes the negativeness of all that and the distortions that we see in society can taint our view of Scripture. And they also make us afraid to stand on controversial ideas that scripture gives us. And that's what I mean by feminism, the fear of cultural critique.

John Piper said this, "If you aren't willing to stand against the tide on this issue, you'll probably cave on other ones. It's a courage issue that bodes ill for standing on other issues." In other words, if you're willing to cave on this, if you're willing to give up ground on this, not because it's true but because it offends your modern sensibilities, and he says, it doesn't bode well for you when it comes to other issues.

That the ground on which you're standing is not solid anymore. It's got a big gaping crack in it, because now you're interpreting scripture in a way that's not sustainable, it's not biblical, it's not true. And that's a big problem.

So in the name of that, let's actually look at some of the Scriptures that I think are helpful and pertinent to this conversation. We are about 40 minutes into this, so we're going to do some rough live flyovers here. Genesis 2, this goes all the way back to the first chapters of the Bible. So this is very-

**Selena:** Creation of man and woman.

**Ryan:** Selena, why don't you read this? And then we'll just briefly comment on each passage here as we read through them. So go ahead.

**Selena:** "Then the Lord God [00:40:00] said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and

brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

**Ryan:**

So right off the bat, you see... this is Genesis 2:18-24. And about verse 19 it say, "Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field..." Including Adam. He formed him from the dust of the ground. "...and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them."

So imagine this. Everything that's living has been brought from the dust, brought out of the ground. And then the animals were ushered to the man so that he would see what he would call him. Very kind of anticlimactic, right? There's no real poetry there. There's no real prose there. It just kind of happens.

And then what happens? God said there was not a helper fit for him. And the Lord said that was not good. So the Lord caused a deep sleep. And everything every living creature, except for the woman, was brought out. And the woman was brought from where? Out of the sight of the man. If that doesn't just scream crown jewel of creation, I don't know what does.

And then what happens? Adam breaks out into song. The very first song of all history, as far as we know, it says, "Oh, at last, bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man." So if that doesn't just scream to us the fact that (a) there is a man and there is his helper. And that helper is not just another creature pulled out of the ground. But instead she is unique, special, and desired and needed, and pulled out and set alongside this man in a very unique way. That screams something else. So that's the first passage.

Let's look at Genesis 1:26-28. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them."

That's just the imago dei. Just in His image, God created them male and female. Equal in value, worth, and importance.

So now let's get down to Genesis 3 real fast. It's after the fall. So Adam and Eve had eaten from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.'

God said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'

So did God actually... did He lose them for a second and He was just not sure where they went? He's asking, "Where are you?" He's not doing that because He doesn't know. He's doing that because He's calling them out of their sins, calling them to respond to Him.

And then Adam responds, "I heard the sound in the garden, I was afraid." He says, "Who told you you were naked? What have you done, basically?" That's interesting. Why does He address the man?" If there were no roles here, if there wasn't a helper and a head in Eden and the sin had happened-

**Selena:** Prior to the fall.

**Ryan:** Prior to the fall. ...why then when the fall happens does God go to the head? Why doesn't He go to Eve? God knew everything. He watched. He saw everything. He wasn't like out for lunch break. He saw this stuff happen. He understood what was happening. But He goes to Adam because why? Adam is the representative. He's the head.

And what does he do? Well, honestly, huge fail. He delegates responsibility. He passed the buck. He says it's her fault instead. So he was being passive in

that moment. And then what happens from there is there's a distortion of the fall.

**Selena:** Well, yeah, it is interesting. Genesis 3 if you look at it closely, the serpent didn't come to Eve while Adam wasn't around. It says Adam was right next to her, if you've ever read that closely. It's very interesting that the undermining [00:45:00] that happens that leads to the brokenness and the distortion of responsibilities, and the pain that will now come along with those roles and responsibilities. And then God goes in the order... He addresses the sin in the order, the roles, and the headship. So, there's a lot to be said there, there's a lot to be looked at, for sure.

**Ryan:** I think there's one more passage to look at. We looked at Galatians 3:28. That's one of those neither slave nor free, male nor female. We talked through that. What do you 1 Corinthians 7...? Do you look at that one.

**Selena:** If you want to.

**Ryan:** This one has to do with a lot of interpretation. But here's the passage. Why don't you read that?

**Selena:** "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.' But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

**Ryan:** Wow.

**Selena:** I think it's interesting that you have to look at, again, the context and the function of the relationship. He's talking about intimacy and being sexually intimate and how in this arena, in that space, our bodies are not our own.

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** And that's purely between husband and wife, married. There's a directive on authority there

**Ryan:** I mean, that's true. And there's a mutual giving of one another. I find it interesting that Paul tells the husband first to give to his wife her conjugal rights. Which a lot of folks reading this would think Paul is a huge misogynist until you get to a text like this. Because it's like, why would he say that? If he's really trying to subjugate women, why would he tell the husband to give sacrificially first? I mean-

**Selena:** I think he it's a call to leadership, a call to love and serve, right?

**Ryan:** Yeah, exactly. It feels like it's more of a "Hey, husband, you lead the charge in this, give yourself away."

**Selena:** First, we're saying, you know, husband, leads and love your wives, give yourself up as Christ gave Himself up for the church. Now, let's get down to some specifics. Sexual intimacy. Husbands, here's a great opportunity for you to give to your wife, so let's call you out first since you are the head and this is the spiritual order in which God purpose and design things.

**Ryan:** I found the footnote on this one particularly helpful. It talks about this idea of the head. So one of the kind of arguments against this is that that word beneath that, the Greek word for that is, if I can find it real fast is, kephale, which means source.

So it's sometimes said that this term, kephale, means source. But in over 50 examples of the expression, Person A is the head of Persons B. Found an ancient Greek literature, Person A has authority over persons B in every case. Therefore, to best understand head in this case, as referring metaphorically to authority.

This is also on the passage we looked at Ephesians 5:23. As what the authority of Christ over the church, this is not the self-centered exercise of power, but leadership that takes care to serve the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of the wife.

So the point we're trying to make here is that there seems to be... when we have a simple reading of the text that is not ignorant, but it's simple. We're not reading all kinds of things into it and tangling it all up and balling it up into what we want it to mean. But instead, we're looking at it and being intelligent about it, but still saying, what does this say to us? How are we to bring ourselves underneath that?

It does seem and it appears that there is an order in the household. There's not a hierarchy, but there is an order. And the order is this: there is a head and there is a helper. And it is a beautiful dance—something that should be

celebrated, not avoided, not held to begrudgingly, but something that we celebrate, and we embrace and we champion this cause because it is God's roadmap in marriage for flourishing in that marriage.

And so we'll actually get into the kind of nitty-gritty of that in next week's conversation. That what does that mean for a husband to wield his authority with love and not to be a tyrant? What does it mean that a wife should submit to her own husband? Women are not to submit to every man. That's not a biblical idea. But there is this idea of her own husband that is specific to marriage. This isn't a universal thing, but it's a marriage thing, and many would argue, within the church. So that's next week.

So I just want to come out and I guess do a summary kind of statement of what we believe and what we see scripture telling us. And this will probably be a jumping-off point for next week.

So because of what Scripture says, this is our stance. [00:50:00] The plain reading scripture, even with cultural context and Greek Hebrew words examines, it shows us a picture of the Christian household as one where the husband is the head, and the wife is to help her. Both are equal in value worth and importance, but their roles are different. Wives are called to submit to their husbands on to the Lord and husbands are to love their wives, as Christ loved the church.

**Selena:** Both of these are an act of submission. An ultimate act of submission to the Lord.

**Ryan:** Submission and love or helpship and headship are not hierarchical, having to do with power or status. They are about God's order, His design. When we let His design govern our aspirations as a married couple and as a family, we believe that is the very best way for husband and wife to flourish and enjoy a strong marriage for their entire lives.

So that's kind of our summary statement. We hope that we've helped you kind of think through some of these texts. We know that this is a very nuanced conversation. We know that also we are not professional apologists nor are we professional theologians. So get a book, read a book. There's some really good ones out there.

But if you don't have time to do that, join us next week, we're going to talk through the implications of this truth for wives and the implications of this truth for husband. We're going to walk through piece by piece, this Ephesians 5 passage, and what are the implications of each word, each chunk of words for husbands and wives? All right?

**Selena:** Sounds good.

**Ryan:** With that said, why don't you to pray us out.

**Selena:** God, thank you for your scripture that is sharp and it can cut through even the deepest parts of us. I pray that you would give us understanding. God, that you would give us clarity, and wisdom and discernment, and understanding your Word truthfully and coming joyfully under its authority and submitting to Your design and Your purpose.

Help us as we continue to look at these very important pieces of marriage and identity and living in a way that glorifies you. May we be clear, may we learn, may we grow, may we be challenged and sharpened by the conversations ahead. Holy Spirit work in us as you always do. In your name, amen.

**Ryan:** Amen. All right, like I said, join us for next week's episode where we parse through this for wives and husbands. It's bound to be a helpful time. So that's it. This episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

**Selena:** In the can

**Ryan:** See you again in about seven days. Until then—

**Selena:** Stay fierce.

**[00:52:38]** <outro>

**Ryan:** Thank you for listening to the Fierce Marriage podcast. For more resources for your marriage, please visit [FierceMarriage.com](https://FierceMarriage.com), or you can find us with our handle @Fiercemarriage on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Thank you so much for listening. We hope this has blessed you. Take care.



**PODCAST NOTES**

- **[00:10:04]**
  - Scripture references:
    - Ephesians 5:15-6:4
  
- **[00:25:56]**
  - Scripture references:
    - Isaiah 66
    - Ephesians 5:21
    - Genesis 2:18-24
  
- **[00:42:27]**
  - Scripture references:
    - Genesis 1:26-28
    - Genesis 3:8-13
    - 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

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