

Lesson 9

BOAZ

What Are My Responsibilities As a Husband?

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Ephesians 5:25

SETTING THE STAGE

According to God's plan, true fulfillment for man comes when he is totally under the lordship of Jesus Christ. This takes expression through his work, what he does during his leisure time, how he serves his country, etc. But, the ultimate "workshop" for fulfilling God's design for man appears to be in marriage. When, in the beginning, God gave man work to do, He also said that it was not good for man to be alone. So God made a female, a companion for Adam, who would not only share his joys and sorrows, but would allow for the continuation of the human race. When this companion was formed from Adam's side, God introduced her to Adam and Adam responded: "*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man*" (Genesis 2:23). With these words, God's pronouncement was that they were "one flesh."

Since God's ultimate plan was to form a bride for His Son, Jesus Christ, He would use the earthly relationship of marriage as a means of conforming both men and women to His nature. As husbands and wives become part of the Church (by accepting the atoning work of Jesus' shed blood upon the cross), they become members of the Bride of Christ — the relationship of which will be consummated at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7). To accomplish this goal, God has decreed, in Ephesians 5:25, that husbands are to love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church.

Though Adam was the first earthly man (and had to learn to fulfill his role as husband without any previous models), in this lesson we'll, consider Boaz and his relationship with his wife, Ruth. We'll also see how Boaz foreshadows Christ, and Ruth foreshadows the Church. We will also look at the responsibilities of a faithful and loving husband as seen through Boaz, as well as other scriptural husbands.

INTRODUCING BOAZ

(Based on the book of Ruth, chapters 1-4)

Boaz stands out as a very noble and godly husband who was used by God to provide a continuation of the seed of Eve that would eventually be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ and, ultimately, in the defeat of Satan.

We read in the genealogies of both Matthew and Luke, that Boaz was the son of Salmon. Matthew adds that his mother was Rahab, the harlot of Joshua 2:1-3 & 6:17.

The book of Ruth begins with the story of Naomi and Elimelech, a couple which left

famine-stricken Judah to live in the country of Moab. There, their two sons married Moabite women, one of which was Ruth. In time, Elimelech and his two sons died, leaving all three women widows. When Naomi decided to return to Judah, she told her daughters-in-law to go back to their families. Orpha did, but Ruth chose to remain with Naomi. They arrived in Naomi's homeland as two destitute women completely dependent upon the mercy of their kinsmen. One of these kinsman was Boaz, who allowed Ruth to glean in his fields. Naomi wanted to find a place in the family for Ruth and she knew Boaz had shown Ruth favor, so Naomi instructed Ruth to lie at Boaz's feet while he slept. Ruth did as Naomi instructed.

Since Boaz was not the closest male relative according to Levirate law (See Deuteronomy 25: 5-10; Leviticus 25:25-28.), he informed the man who was, so that he could carry out his responsibility. When the other man declined, Boaz followed the procedure to purchase Naomi's land and acquire Ruth as his wife. Thus, he became her "kinsman-redeemer," one who purchased her — a fitting picture of Jesus and the Church.

Boaz's name is significant; it means "in him is strength." (It also graces the north pillar of Solomon's temple. 1 Kings 7:21) Boaz was true to his name, since he was strong in grace, integrity, and purpose. He was also courteous, solicitous, affectionate, devoted, generous, honorable, upright, and hospitable, as well as full of goodness, truth, and honor. Boaz is a fitting example of some of the character qualities of a faithful and loving husband, even as he took on the responsibilities as given by God.

From the union of Boaz and Ruth, Obed was born. Obed was father of Jesse, and grandfather of David...all in the lineage of Jesus Christ.

LESSONS FROM BOAZ

God-given Responsibilities of Husbands

The Hebrew word translated "husband" is the word *ba'al*, which means "master" or "owner." Dictionaries define "husband" as one who is a "master" over his household.

There are two ways to be a master. The first is God's way, using wisdom from above; the second is Satan's way, using earthly wisdom. (See James 3:13-18.) The latter way originates from pride, the desire to be important, to control everything, to lord it over others. To be a master God's way is to be a servant, to be responsible for the welfare of others. The master's status doesn't come from forcing himself on others; he earns his position through service. Jesus was the divine model for this kind of master. He came to serve, not to be served.

As a man takes a wife and, thus, becomes a husband, he assumes new responsibilities. Genesis 2:24 tells us that a man is to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. This involves not only physically leaving, but also psychologically leaving childish ways of being carefree and self-centered.

Boaz had the maturity needed by a husband. The phrase *you have not run after the younger men* (Ruth 3:10) indicates that he was older than Ruth. But age isn't the only sign of maturity. Boaz was established in his work (Ruth 2:3-9). He respected Ruth when he could have taken advantage of her sexually (Ruth 3:7-18). He knew and obeyed the laws of

the land. Other men in the community respected him (Ruth 4:1-10). Regarding the decisions he made, he sought and received the blessing of the city elders (Ruth 4:11-12).

Do you consider yourself mature as a husband? If so, how did you become so? If not, what can you do to become so?

According to Scripture, what are some of the responsibilities God gives husbands?

He will love his wife.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her....
Ephesians 5:25

When we agree, as part of the wedding ceremony, to “love and to cherish” our wives, we may be caught up in the idealism and romanticism of the occasion. How difficult it is to love, let alone cherish when we experience the pressures and frustrations of life in the days and years following!

The Greek language has several words for love. Each word has a very specific meaning. The word translated “love” in Ephesians 5:25, is *agapáo*, God’s sacrificial love. *Agapáo* is more than the erotic feeling evoked by physical beauty, it’s an act of the will. The word used here is from the same root word that describes God’s act of mercy toward us when we didn’t deserve it (John 3:16 and Romans 5:8). Loving our wives necessitates more than responding to the flesh; it may mean denying our flesh. The counterfeit love of the world is a type of love that seeks its own pleasure, fulfilling its own desires and needs first. The Bible calls this lust.

List some of the ways you express *agapáo* to your wife:

He will be faithful to his wife until death parts them.

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. (Matthew 19:5-6)

By law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive. (Romans 7:2a)

Faithfulness is based on commitment, not feelings. To experience this fully, we must go the way of the cross...laying down our rights as we serve our wives. Proverbs 5:18-23 admonishes men:

May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer...may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths. The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

What causes unfaithfulness? Why do we so often want what we don't have? How do we justify thinking that we would desire a relationship with another woman?

Put a check by those areas of the flesh, which might lead you to be unfaithful:

Lust Physical sight Sexual gratification
 Pleasure Flattery Feeling needed

How does obedience to the following scriptures help us be faithful to our wives?

- *I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. (Job 31:1)*
- *You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)*
- *Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself. (Ephesians 5:33)*
- *Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men...It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God....thus you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous. (Proverbs 2:12, 16-17, 20)*
- *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (1 Peter 3:7)*

He will assume his role as his wife's spiritual head and covering.

I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. (1 Corinthians 11:3)

When, in Genesis 3:16b, God told Eve that her desire would be for her husband and that he would rule over her, He was giving her a "covering" from further attack by Satan. As the wife submits to her husband, and her husband submits to Christ, they are protected by God's "divine order." Along with this "benefit" come consequences. When a woman, because of her God-given desire (See Genesis 3:16b.), allows her husband to be her spiritual head, she puts herself in a vulnerable position. If she is abused in any way, she will not respect her husband. If she is affirmed and cared for properly, their relationship will be a good one. As her "head," the husband will pray for his wife, share the Word of God with her, and encourage her in her own walk with the Lord. If she is an unbeliever, she will be sanctified (made holy) through him. (See 1 Corinthians 7:14.)

Though there are different interpretations on how this is to be carried out, and many perceive it as pertaining to the traditional Middle Eastern culture of which Paul was a part, Paul gives a command to women in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 that: *women should remain silent in the churches...If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husband at home....* This implies that her husband should know and be in a position to answer her questions!

As Ruth literally placed herself under the covering of Boaz, he was able to provide her with a new name and standing, even though she was a foreigner.

Do you consider yourself the spiritual head of your family? If not, how can you become so?

He will fulfill his marital duty.

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.
(1 Corinthians 7:3)

In the context of this verse, "marital duty" seems to mean sexual intercourse. For, the surrounding passages also say that each man should have his own wife to keep from immorality, and that the wife's body does not belong just to her, nor does her husband's just to him. Thus, they are not to deprive one another of what belongs in marriage. If they agree to abstain from sexual relationship for a period of time, they need to come together again, lest Satan tempt them. According to Hebrews 13:4, *marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*

Due to the number of broken marriages, sexual abuse, pornography, etc., it's obvious we are increasingly frustrated in this area of marriage. But be assured, God has set limits for this special part of the marriage relationship, and violating them brings consequences both now and for eternity.

Are you faithful in your "marital duty" to your wife? If not, what can you do?

He will provide for her.

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)

Providing for one's wife and family does not only mean meeting physical needs (like food, a place to live, transportation, etc.), it means a husband must also provide understanding, acceptance, etc.

The following are some needs often expressed by wives. Are you aware of these in your wife? If so, how do you make sure these needs are met?

Recognition as an individual with her own talents, abilities, personality, etc.

Fatigue and stress due to daily routine

Isolation, boredom...especially if tied down with young children

Acceptance by in-laws

Sexual and health concerns

Problems with children

Biblical Husbands

Husbands in Scripture had the same problems and needs as men today. Search the following list for those husbands with whom you identify, then read the scriptural passage noted and see what consequence resulted from their actions.

A husband who:

blamed his wife for his own sin	Adam	Genesis 3:1-12, 17-19
saw his wife saved because of his obedience	Noah	Genesis 6:22-7:7
lost his wife because they were both disobedient	Lot	Genesis 19:15-26
didn't protect his wife	Abraham	Genesis 20:1-18
prayed for his wife	Isaac	Genesis 25:19-21
conferred with his wives	Jacob	Genesis 31:4-16
spent time separated from his wife because of his work	Moses	Exodus 18:1-8
did not share intimately with his wife	Samson	Judges 14:1-20
sympathized with his wife	Elkanah	1 Samuel 1:1-8
was opposite in personality and character to his wife	Nabal	1 Samuel 25:1-17, 36-38
was ridiculed by his wife	David	2 Samuel 6:20-23
let his wife dominate him	Ahab	1 Kings 21:1-25
acted on information from his wife	Namaan	2 Kings 5:1-14
tried to use his wife for his own pleasure	Ahasuerus	Esther 1:10-22
had to listen to his wife's angry outburst when he was "down" himself	Job	Job 2:7-10
loved his wife despite her unfaithfulness	Hosea	Hosea 1:2-11; 3:1-3
was unable to communicate with his wife	Zechariah	Luke 1:11-25
protected his wife	Joseph	Matthew 2:13-23
stood by his wife in time of grief	Jairus	Mark 5:21-24, 35-43
lived with his wife unlawfully	Herod	Matthew 14:1-5
did not listen to his wife's advice	Pilate	Matthew 27:13-26
purposed with his wife to lie to others	Ananias	Acts 5:1-11
realized he must respect his wife if he wanted his prayers answered	Peter	Mark 1:29-31; 1 Peter 3:1-7
worked together well with his wife	Aquila	1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:3-5a; Acts 18:18-28; 2 Timothy 4:19

God as Husband / Jesus Christ as Bridegroom

When God made a covenant with Abraham to call out a people of His own, He meant this to be an everlasting relationship. *I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you* (Genesis 17:7). In this covenant-relationship with His chosen people, God would see Himself as their husband! Jeremiah 3:14-15 reminds us of this as we hear God calling His people back from a time of spiritual adultery. He says, *"Return, faithless people," declares the Lord, "for I am your husband."* (KJV says: *"I am married unto you" I will choose you....one from a town and two from a clan...and bring*

you to Zion. Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding."

If we understand this covenant relationship God has with His people, the Jews, we can see how, throughout the whole of Scripture, God is dealing with His "wife" ...wooing her back from spiritual adultery, bringing her through the refiner's fire, and anticipating being united with her again (as described in Daniel 12:1-3, when Israel accepts Jesus as her Messiah (Romans 11:25-31). Meanwhile, the Gentiles who have become the Church will be grafted into God's family. (Read the whole chapter of Romans 11 to better understand the relationship God has with both Israel and the Church.)

Jesus, on the other hand, is the Bridegroom of the Church...all those, both Jew and Gentile, who have accepted the work of His atoning blood upon the cross. Ephesians 5:25-32 says it this way: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy...after all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church...for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery...but I am talking about Christ and the Church.* The description of this union at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is found in Revelation 19:6-9.

It's interesting to note that the whole book of Ruth can be seen as an analogy of the relationship of the Jews, the Church, and Jesus Christ. Naomi, as Israel, was dealt with by the Lord. After sojourning in a foreign land, she was restored and became part of the lineage of the Messiah. She should have been the one to marry Boaz, but because she could no longer bear children, she had to allow Ruth to take her place. And so Ruth, a Gentile, the Church, became the bride of Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer.

Ruth had accepted Naomi's God as she left her own family for a new relationship. When Boaz found Ruth in a field at harvest, he showed her much love and mercy...to the extent he was willing to pay a price to have her as his bride. Because of their marriage, she was allowed to inherit all that was his. Out of their union came Obed, father of Jesse, who was father of David...of the lineage of Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY

In our study of Boaz, an example of a godly husband, we have looked at some of the responsibilities Scripture gives husbands...to love their wives, to be faithful to them all their lives, to be their covering and spiritual head, to protect them, and to fulfill their marital duty with them. In the process, we looked at other Biblical couples and learned lessons from their examples. We have also discovered that not only is God the "husband" of Israel, but Jesus is coming as the Bridegroom for the Church, all Jews and Gentiles who have accepted the work of His shed blood upon the cross. Boaz, as Ruth's kinsman-redeemer, is a type of Christ...our "husband" to be!