

29 JAN 1980

HEADSHIP AND RESPONSE

IN MARRIAGE

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The relationships between men and women are always interesting and are talked about a lot these days, with anti-discrimination bills, women's liberation movements and so on. At the same time the breakdown in marriage and the termination of relationships between husband and wife are steadily rising in number. Every breakdown in marriage brings a lot of sorrow not only to the parties themselves and especially to their children, but also to their close relatives, so the subject of men and women relations is an important and practical one.

The Bible has very clear teaching on this matter, and since the Bible is the manufacturer's manual as it were, for God our creator wrote it, we are silly not to know what it says. But we must understand it in its own terms. The first thing the Bible teaches is that the head of every woman is the man, but headship in the Bible means taking the initiative in being the servant, just as God who is our head unceasingly cares for us, and Jesus Christ, who is our head, gave His life to rescue all who will respond to Him from everlasting condemnation in hell. Headship means service, not dominance or laziness. Servants don't give orders or force their will on those they serve. The husband's duty is to take thought and advance his wife's welfare, to see what her gifts are and give her opportunity for developing them, to provide in every way possible for her happiness. That is what it means to be her head, and the wife is to respond. It comes naturally because that is the way God has made us. Sometimes it is said that the wife should obey her husband, but the Bible puts this in the context as a response to the loving care of her husband who is taking thought for her welfare. Response would perhaps be a better

way of translating the word than obedience, though in practice it amounts to the same thing when there is a true loving relationship as God intended marriage to be.

We hear a lot of talk today about doing your own thing, carving out your own career and so on. This is not a Bible way of life. The wife should support her husband and not seek an independent life or an independent personal development, and the husband should take thoughtful care for all aspects of his wife's life. If she is a gifted woman it is his job to see that there are opportunities for her to develop and use her gifts. The headship the husband has been given by the creator is not to be turned into self-indulgence or dominance, that is not what the Bible means, for that is not the example which Christ our creator has given us in His own life. Headship and response; loving care and support bring about the happy unity which the creator intends for every marriage.

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
is broadcast every Sunday
at 7.05 p.m. over Radio 2CH

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25/11/79

47/79