



QUESTION: What do you believe about roles in marriage? Is AC3 complementarian or egalitarian when it comes to male/female relationships in marriage?

ANSWER: First let me define your two terms for those not familiar with them:

- Many Christians believe the Bible teaches a timeless principle of male headship where headship is defined as the model of servant-leadership by husbands as exemplified by Jesus Christ. Husbands and wives are of equal value but complementary in function.
- Other Christians believe that the idea of male headship expressed in Scripture does not mandate male authority, and that the ideal model is mutual submission and leadership by gifting, within an egalitarian relationship.

You can see our statement of faith online ([www.ac3.org/faith.htm](http://www.ac3.org/faith.htm)) and it pretty much sums up the theological hills we're going to die on. This issue, along with many other important things that serious Christians debate about is not one of them. That doesn't mean we don't think marriage is very important! We affirm the basic biblical paradigm of a God-centered, love-oriented, covenant marriage relationship that is to reflect the oneness and self giving inside of God's own tri-personal nature.

We don't have developed "policy" on this, but here are my feelings: I believe that, when guided by the principles of agape-love and servant-leadership, either model of gender roles in marriage can serve to foster God-glorifying, biblical, covenant-marriages. In fact, when they do, I've noticed that either model of marriage is very hard to distinguish from the other by actual observation.

Ironically, on the other hand, I've seen marriages ostensibly built on the complementarian model where, because they do not live out the broader scriptural principles of agape-love and servanthood, the "submissive" wife is angry, controlling and the "leading" husband is a brow beaten mess. And I've seen marriages ostensibly built on the egalitarian view where the same broader principles are not followed and the "equal" husbands have never changed a diaper, work 70 hours a week and dictate policy from afar.

To enhance the broader marriage principles that lead to a God reflecting oneness in marriage, when I teach on this at AC3, I offer the following two fold biblical challenge which is helpfully offered by Dr. Greg Boyd ([www.whchurch.org/content/page\\_151.htm](http://www.whchurch.org/content/page_151.htm))

(1) To those couples who follow the model of male headship: Husbands strive to avoid both self-centered control and worldly authoritarianism, and seek to exemplify the self-sacrificial servant-leadership demonstrated by the Master toward his Bride, the church. Wives, strive to avoid both selfish independence or passive apathy in the marriage, and seek to exemplify the active, passionate submission that characterizes the church's love for its eternal groom, Jesus Christ.



(2) To those couples who follow the egalitarian model: Strive to avoid a marriage characterized by indecision, or constant infighting and seek to lead and/or follow in the various areas of your marriage as God has gifted each of you. In all things, exemplify a heart-attitude of submission toward each other, after the pattern of self-sacrificial servanthood demonstrated by Christ toward his Father.