

Leadership & Submission

– Sunday School Notes –

In the past weeks we have looked at studied several character traits in both men and women that can be disruptive for a marriage. We have studied several types of husbands who are not active leaders of the family: the man who withdraws because he lacks confidence; the workaholic who has set the wrong priorities; and the irresponsible big boy who simply doesn't grow up. We also have studied several types of wives who do not submit to their husbands: the doormat with a low self-esteem who submits outwardly but not in her heart; the overly busy women who tries to have it all; and the angry woman who challenges the leadership role of the husband.

It is obvious that all these character traits may occur both in men and women but they become particularly dangerous when they turn a man into a passive husband or a woman into an unsubmitive wife.

12 Manipulation

Today we want to study one last and very subtle form of unsubmitiveness that unfortunately is practiced by an increasing number of wives as a means to get what they want. *Manipulation* is the skill of getting other people to do what they might not have done out of their own choice. It is a secret approach – from an outside perspective it appears that the manipulated persons act out of free will. They are not *forced* to do so and so they carry the full responsibility alone.

This is why manipulation is so popular. You secretly issue commands for the other to follow, but if something goes wrong you don't have to take the blame. After all, you didn't tell him what do do – he himself decided that. If you're subtle enough, nobody can see the secret strings you're pulling. Our whole society, particularly politics and the advertising business, is based on this principle. You *have* to make people believe that it is good for them to elect you or to buy your products. And – since everybody tries to do that – you can't just let the facts speak for themselves. You convince people by appealing to all kinds of motives, often those that have little to do with your political agenda or your product. So in politics you pick on your opponent and tell the people how bad he is – why a law-abiding citizen can't vote democrat or why a person who cares for the poor can't vote republican. That still doesn't explain why voting for you is a good idea but it works. Similarly, commercials play with fear (if you don't use Lysterine, then germs are going to kill you; if you don't brush your teeth with whitening past you'll become a social outcast), status (you *need* to have that new car; must wear these clothes); tempt you with offers that allegedly will never come again (if you don't buy now ...). Charity organizations make you feel guilty if you don't donate money to them – the trick is the same everywhere. If people don't

do what we want and if it is not possible to *force* them into doing it, we use the *emotional remote control*. It works almost always.

But using the same emotional remote control in the family is one of the best ways to destroy mutual trust and respect. Women who try to manipulate their husbands – and this happens far more often than the other way around – give up the closeness with their husbands that God intended and find instead a distance and lack of respect for their spouses and ultimately for themselves as well. They see the short-term gratification of getting what they want – but they fail to see the long-term damage caused by their behavior, namely the slow erosion of their marriages.

12.1 Bathsheba

One of the prime examples of a manipulating woman in the bible is Bathsheba, who had a great influence on David's decisions but is never really mentioned to be very close to him. We are probably all familiar with the story in **2. Samuel 11** where David first commits adultery with Bathsheba and then – after she gets pregnant and he can't find a way out – has her husband murdered. We all know that David is fully responsible for what he did. He sinned and he had to face the consequences.

But what do we know about Bathsheba's part in the events? Was she really the innocent woman, who couldn't do anything but follow the king's command? Let us look closer at the description in the Bible. Let us read verses 2–5 and look at the events from Bathsheba's perspective:

And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

At a first glance, we see a woman who was faced with the man who was the sole law in the country. Certainly she was powerless to stop his advances. *But was that really so?* Could David have committed adultery without her consent? Look at **2. Samuel 13:11-14** where David's son Amnon tries to sleep with his step-sister Tamar. You see how Tamar tried to resist. Does the Bible anywhere mention that Bathseba tried to resist David? After all, what he proposed was clearly against God's law.

Adultery is a two-way street. It involves consent and often a great deal of encouragement. What was Bathsheba doing when she was bathing in sight of the king? Do we really believe she didn't know that she could be seen by him? Or that she didn't know that David had a weakness for women? Why did she accept his invitation? Why didn't she say no, when he wanted to sleep with her?

And finally – what was the purpose of that message to David, saying “I am pregnant”. Clearly she wanted him to deal with the situation. “Let David figure out a solution for that – I am not responsible for what happened and what he has to do”. And David falls into the trap. Instead of admitting his guilt he tries to rescue himself *and Bathsheba* – and we all know how that ended. Bathsheba’s husband is getting murdered and Bathsheba gets the king as her husband. Her manipulations have paid off very well.

But when we go on reading, which I strongly recommend, we see that the manipulations continue to the very end. Bathsheba doesn’t play a great role in David’s life. Except for the birth of Solomon she is not mentioned again until shortly before David’s death. But then her hour comes again. When we read **1.Kings 1** it becomes apparent that some time in the past she must have made David swear to make Solomon his successor as king. We don’t know how she managed to do that but usually Solomon would never have been given preference to his older brothers. Now as David gets weaker, one of his other sons gets ready to become king and again Bathsheba intervenes. She goes to the king and

And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne. And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest it not: And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called. And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders. **1.Kings 1:17–21**

And the result?

And the king sware, and said, As the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, Even as I sware unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day. Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever. **1.Kings 1:29–31**

I admit, the prophet Nathan was involved in that manipulation as well and God permitted it to happen that way, but David would never had made Solomon king during his lifetime if Bathseba hadn’t played the “fear and guilt” card at this time. She got what she wanted, but the method she used was not what brought her closer to David’s heart.

Well, “sometimes men are just too dumb to see what needs to be done and all they need is a little encouragement” is the argument that women may bring up at this time. After all, David didn’t notice what had happened and his wife needed to step in. Wasn’t it for the best of them all that she did so?

That may have been true in this particular case, but for some reason, and I don’t mean to pick on you, women *always* seem to believe that they know better than their husbands what is good for them and for the family. I have seen quite a few women who believe that they are God’s chosen instrument to *change their husbands* for the better. They feel obliged to teach them manners, tell them how to dress, or what to do for the house. After all, the guys are really helpless if their wives don’t tell them what to do – aren’t they? And isn’t it much better to help them silently to do what is good instead of having to go through the trouble of trying to convince them? Hey – we learned last time that men don’t like to change – isn’t it just better to direct them a little bit? Isn’t that true submission – to help a husband make the right decisions without threatening his leadership role?

This argument sounds convincing, because there *is* a certain truth in the observations that I just made. But does that justify manipulating your husband?

You may think that by pulling the secret strings you actually help your husband to do what is good. But what has this to do with submission if you make him do what *you* feel is right? If he is not convinced but does it anyway who then is the true leader in the family? And – don’t you think that even the most naive husband will eventually discover that he is being manipulated – and will try to create an emotional distance from you. Eventually you will lose him completely.

12.2 Forms of Manipulation

Most people can agree to what we have discussed so far. Manipulation is deadly for a relationship and should not be used as a means of gaining control. But the real problem is that many women fail to see that they actually use manipulation, because they don’t do this consciously. You will hardly ever find a wife who openly admits to manipulate her husband. But this doesn’t mean they don’t do it – they have just grown up so much with tiny little manipulations that they don’t realize anymore when they cross the border from encouragement to manipulation.

So let us look a bit at the various forms of manipulation. What means can a woman use to gain control over her husband?

ACTIVE PHASE!!

Sexual Manipulation: The most obvious and commonly practiced technique is *seduction*. Women use sexual attraction to turn a men’s head around and there is hardly a man who can easily resist this form of manipulation. Bathsheba is just one example of a sexually manipulating women. History books – at least the better ones – are full with descriptions of women who gained great influence over men just by seduction. Rumors say that many actresses and models had

to use sexual manipulation to climb up the career ladder and the same happens in many other professions or companies. You don't have to sleep with a man to wrap him around your fingers. The intended payoff is often of material nature: gifts, clothing, jewelry, money, or a step forward in your career.

The ability to manipulate a man's attention by sexual attraction is present in almost every woman from childhood on. As a young girl, you learn to be *cute* in front of Daddy by doing the little things that get his attention and applause. This will make sure that Daddy gives you the things you want and often spares you a punishment that you deserve for misbehavior. As teenager, you use the same gift to gain social approval and the admiration of your girlfriends over your abilities to attract boys. Isn't it nice to have so many friends and be the center of attention? This is the time where you train that gift and then ... you get married. Now you direct all your charm at your husband – it is only natural that you do so. But now the conditions have changed. What used to be a means to attract people is now supposed to be a free gift, something that *does not expect an immediate gratification* as response.

But at this point some women *refuse to grow up*. They are still like the little girl that sits on Daddy's lap and expects something in return for being attractive. They haven't learned that gifts are supposed to be for free – they consider their femininity something to be used and are “nice” only when they want something. There are two possible outcomes. Either they gain complete control over their husbands and make them their puppets which they can hardly respect. Or their husbands become unresponsive and unenthusiastic over time, because they have seen through the pattern and are tired of being used. In the first case, love has turned materialistic while in the second case the little girl has the feeling that love has grown cold because her tactics don't work anymore.

In both cases she doesn't experience true love, because her concept of love is still a childish one. She has never understood true love and cannot recognize it, even if her husband shows it to her.

Punishment: A second and equally strong form of manipulation is *emotional punishment*. Instead of gratifying good behavior you punish his wrongdoing. This often works quite well because a man tries to avoid pain and thus in the end does what you want. There are several common ways to punish a man ... an please don't use that as recipe that you can try out after the service:

Shame: The greatest weakness of a man can be found in the area of his ego. He needs the feeling of importance and social acceptance. Many a wife has found out that her husband can be put to shame by exposing his weaknesses: his lack of thinking or consideration, a bad habit, an insecurity, his financial weaknesses. If you point that out at the right moment you can really hit him

hard – particularly if you do this in public at social gatherings, in Sunday school, when colleagues are present or – even worse in moments when he is most vulnerable. Shame and embarrassment can be a very strong weapon and some women have perfected the skill of manipulation by using that weapon just in the right moments.

Flirtatiousness: Some women give their husbands the impression that despite the marriage vow they are not fully committed to them. They still test their attractiveness on other men and play the flirt game. She will certainly get his attention when she does so – whether out of his sight or in front of him – because to a husband a flirtatious wife is a public slap to his masculinity. He can never be sure whether she is fully his or not. Some women like play with that lack of security and thus gain power over their husbands. Some even think that this is fun. But **Proverbs 11:22** says

As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

All the beauty and desirability of a woman is lost if her character doesn't match her outer appearance. True beauty comes from the inside, and most husbands react to that form of beauty much stronger than to the physical appearance.

Withholding love: Some women have learned to use the “cold shoulder” as a means to communicate to their husbands that they have fallen into disfavor. Instead of telling them what is wrong they let them guess until they have found the reason. For most men this is so frustrating that after a while they give up trying. Withholding love is just a means to drive your husband away. Withholding sex is an even stronger form of this. For the woman, the withdrawal is justified by a misbehavior of the husband. But for the husband, the message sounds quite differently. If she withholds sex from him because he did something wrong, she is telling him that she doesn't really enjoy the sexual relationship with him but only uses it as a reward for “being good”. But sex was given by God to promote not just physical joy but also the oneness of wife and husband. And his instructions about that are very clear:

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. **1. Corinthians 7:3–5**

If you withhold sex from your husband – for whatever reason – you drive a deep wedge between the two of you and the oneness intended by God cannot become a reality.

Shame, Flirtatiousness, and Withholding Love can be very strong weapons that will give you power over your husband. He will try everything to avoid the pain created by them and you will often get what you want – temporarily. But eventually he is going to hate you for using this method against him and distance himself emotionally from you. This will not only make your weapons less efficient but also destroy the closeness that you once had.

False vulnerability: A third form of manipulation used by women is to appeal to his role as protector. Men melt with tears. If you show your vulnerability they will do what they can to protect you. There are women who have learned to use that. If they have the feeling that their husbands don't do what they want, they let their emotions of frustration and anger grow until they actually begin crying. That surely gets the attention of their husbands and quite often a man changes his mind about a firm and wisely chosen decision just to see his wife happy again.

Tears can be a very powerful instrument of manipulation, but they are a very deceptive form of communication. A woman who uses tears to her own advantage, will eventually be out of touch with her true feelings, particularly if she started that practice already during her childhood. She cannot distinguish between real emotional pain and anger or the pain of just not getting it her way. Even worse, it usually backfires after a while when the husband becomes aware of what she is doing to him. He will not react to your tears anymore but just become angry at you because you try again – even if the situation is really serious. You have played the card too often to make him believe it's real.

Have you ever wondered why the reaction of your husband seems to be so cold compared to the earlier years of your marriage? The cause might be right here.

Martyrdom: Closely related to false vulnerability is the role of the righteous victim. Martyrdom extracts an emotional reaction from a man that gives some women the same feeling as being loved. Although pity can rarely be equated with love, some women – and strangely enough many older people as well – settle for the feeling that comes with the attention of pity. So they let others know how much they suffer particularly if they suffer because of something they do for you or something that you don't do for them. And they don't want to find a way out of their suffering – they only want to talk about it. They want to be martyrs, because that is their way to get attention. Don't you ever dare taking their suffering away, because that will be shaking the very reason for their existence. Usually they find something else under which they suffer.

Wives who chose the role of the righteous victim often have a genuine sense of unworthiness and inferiority. Unfortunately, the attention and affection they're getting from their husbands – and other people as well – will not be genuine and after a while people will withdraw from such a person because it is not easy to listen all this negative talk every day.

Guilt: The fifth common ploy in manipulation is guilt, a weapon that is practiced in some homes to perfection. With an icy stare, a silence, cold words, or long complaints and tears about the pain he has caused the offending husband is put in his place. However it is been done, he shall feel guilty about his actions. He is the sole reason for her emotional distance or the pain she is going through. He shall feel bad about that until he comes crawling back, apologizes, and does everything to make up for what he did wrong.

But guilt, like so many emotionally manipulative tools, is a *negative* reinforcer. It may produce behavioral change, but will also cause resentment and anger.

Competition: the last manipulative tool that women use against their husbands is *competition*. If she cannot get his attention with her looks, her cooking, or her need – maybe she can get it by being more successful in her job than he is in his. There is nothing wrong with women who take a job because it is fulfilling and enjoyable or helps to make a]ends meet. But it should never be used as a weapon to get your husband’s attention by letting him know that he is not as good as you are.

Children: can also be used in the manipulation game. An unhappy woman sees her child as someone who needs her while her husband doesn’t. The child loves her and gives her the attention she needs. She may even see the child as the bond that will hold her marriage together and bring the attention of her husband back to her. But that simply does not happen. A marriage is designed to hold children together, but children cannot hold their parents together. It does not work that way.

Usually, it is the other way around. The husband will notice the preoccupation of his wife with her child while she more and more excludes him from her affection. If there has been a distance between the two before, it will only increase.

In each of the above manipulation strategies, the changes in your husband will only be short-term. There is only one lasting effect, and that is the increasing distance between you and your husband. If you use these methods against your husband, you clearly express that you have little respect for him and you will never find out how important you really are to your husband. Does he love you for what you are or does he show attention only when you pry it out of him?

How can you find out? How can you get his attention and affection without having to use the emotional remote control?

12.3 How to create change without manipulation?

The “right” tactics for creating a long-lasting change without using manipulation have to be based on a sincere respect for your husband. He is an independent person

with a right to make his decisions without being under your influence. If you notice that you have gotten into the cycle of manipulation, then it is time for a change.

Turn your back on manipulation: The first step towards a healthier relationship is to completely turn your back on manipulation, that is admit the problem first to yourself and then to your husband, and then ask for his forgiveness and help. This may be an entirely unfamiliar situation for you but it will immediately communicate your respect for him. If your husband has become distant then just the process of addressing the subject and accepting the responsibility for your past behavior will often already bring a refreshing newness into your relationship. But even if it doesn't, even if you don't see immediate success and if you have to carry on a one-sided attempt, there is still hope because you do what God advised you to do:

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

1. Peter 3:1–2

Make a commitment to minister to him instead of managing him: The biblical understanding of marriage is that of mutual submission, not of one person directing the other. Instead of managing your husband, you're supposed to minister to him – to be a helper that fills his incompleteness, a wife who is dedicated to her husband. But you can only do that if you're really interested in him as a person. Did you ever ask yourself “*What are my husband's greatest needs and how can God use me to supply them?*”?

Most women focus too much on the needs their husbands tend to ignore: the need to eat properly, to dress well, to show proper behavior in social contacts. These are *real* needs – there is no doubt about it – but hardly the ones that your husband cares about. Much more often they are *your* needs – you want to experience your husband in a certain way and that is why you work so hard to meet them. But if you do so, you start managing him again because you decide what is best for him.

If you really want to minister to him, you should find out what *he* cares about and see that these needs are met first. Instead of ministering only to his physical needs – what can you do to minister to his soul and spirit? Don't decide this all on your own – if you want to minister to him, you need to find out from *him* what he needs. And be assured – God has made you the right person to meet those needs.

If you let your husband know that you care about *him*, that you love him for who he is and don't try to manage or change him, then he will let go of his distance.

If he understands that you care about what is important for *him* and not just about how *you* want him to be, then he will be much more willing to find out what he can do for you. **Luke 6:38** says “Give, and it shall be given unto you” – God will keep this promise if you trust him in that.

A particularly important way to express that you care for him is your style of communication. If you want him to understand your wishes and expectations – why don’t you try to express this in a way that makes it easier for him:

That is: tell him explicitly what you want. Don’t just vaguely let him know what you like – be specific. Even more, don’t just tell him all the things you don’t like and let him draw his conclusions from that – express your needs in a positive way. And give your input when it is time to make decisions or take action, not just a few weeks ahead of time. Men need a straightforward approach and you can achieve much more if you respect that – even if it appears less romantic.

Why? Shouldn’t he remember what you said last week? And isn’t it sufficient that you let him know how you feel about things in general? Shouldn’t he be able to draw the right conclusions from that and know what you need?

Many women believe that this should be so. But it doesn’t work that way, and there is a simple reason for that – best explained by a list that I received last week – the top ten issues that men understand about women.

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- 10.

Figure 1: The top ten issues that men understand about women

So what would you put in here at number one and two? . . .

Right! There isn’t anything that we can all agree to put in here. The thing is – men don’t think like women. Your husband can’t understand what you expect from him, if you don’t tell it to him on *his* terms. But if you do adopt to his style of communication from time to time, you can strengthen the bond of your marriage a lot.

Affirm his ‘right’ choices: If you have managed your husband for quite a while already, you will certainly have given him the impression that he can’t do anything that gets your approval. As a result, he may already have given up on even trying to please you – if he can’t do it right, why should he bother? It is time to reverse this process.

Most women are not aware that men need compliments as much as they do, even if they don't show this very often. If – instead of making him feel bad about his misbehavior – you compliment him for the positive things he does you achieve two things at once. First of all, you communicate in a positive way what *your* needs are and secondly you express your genuine appreciation for what he does. For some women this may mean swallowing some pride, but – even if it may take a while – you *will* see the positive effects of this.

People may ask “isn't that manipulation as well”? No! It is the opposite of it, because you only affirm the choices that *he* made all by himself and because you honestly express that you appreciate what he does for you.

Appeal to his values: In some rare cases affirming the right choices of your husband will not lead to the positive response, because he has hardened too much already. In that case it is necessary to take some time for a serious talk that aims at a complete new beginning.

This is the time when you need to carefully spell out your expectations and appeal to his values and to what he stands for. Men can deal with such a straightforward approach much better than with any hidden manipulation – particularly when you genuinely express that you believe in him – because the open request puts the ball into their court.

A loving confrontation: What, however, can you do if your husband doesn't respond at all and if all the previous attempts lead nowhere? Most women then choose the path of confrontation. This is not a bad idea as such, but usually they choose the wrong method for that.

Often they confront their husbands with an uncontrolled emotional outburst. But this reaction does not aim at a solution but just expresses a desire to get even. Most men can't cope with that. In **Proverbs 21:19, 27:15** we find a typical male response of a man who goes through such an experience:

It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

that is precisely what men do if you confront them with an outburst of anger – they remove themselves to a place of isolation.

The reaction is the same, if the wife chooses the low-level confrontation, better known as nagging. Nagging is the form of frequent confrontation that carries with it the notion that nothing will ever change. She reminds him over and over again of what he should do, but implicitly expresses the feeling that he won't change. And this is exactly what will happen – no change and only withdrawal.

It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a quarrelsome woman in a wide house. **Proverbs 21:9.**

So how can you confront your husband if you have to. How can you do this in a loving way. There are a few things you should keep in mind.

Defuse personal anger: before you start talking with your husband you must get rid of that angry self-talk in your mind. If you say to yourself “He will never change” or “He just doesn’t care about me” – then you will walk into the conversation filled with anger and there is no way to achieve anything, **for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God (James 1:20).**

God has brought you two together. If he managed that, he can also change your husband into the loving and active leader that you need. Don’t let your emotions betray you – there is always hope.

Discern the legitimate needs of you and your husband: The ability to approach other people with *their* needs in mind is both very disarming and also a mark of people who are committed to loving other people. If you ask yourself what your husband wants from you and your marriage, and how you can supply these needs, then you will quickly gain a hearing in a loving confrontation. Your husband is going to listen to you if you let him know that you care for his real needs.

But you must also be able to clearly lay out your own needs and what you expect from your husband. Your husband must be able to understand what you need. How should he do so if you can’t tell him that?

Manage the crisis, not the husband: Finally, you must be able to draw a line and let your husband know if things can’t be allowed to continue as they have been. You must clearly and lovingly set the boundaries that he cannot step over and be able to suggest solutions that can bring you both back to normal again.¹

Many women view the above recipes as beneath their dignity. After all it puts a lot of burden on them and “if the guy loves me, shouldn’t he do all these things that I expect routinely”? While this rationale has some truth in it, it is not very realistic. Marriage is not only about what you can receive, it is about how you can minister. “Don’t ask what your husband can do for you – ask what you can do for your husband” – there is no way to get around this principle. If you want to win your husbands heart, you have to minister to him instead of manipulating him. But if you do it God’s way, you will have a much better chance for success than if you try it your own way.

¹Boundaries are a whole topic by themselves and we will discuss this in detail in the class that we will begin next month. Setting boundaries is important in any relationship, to make sure that you take responsibility for your own feelings, values, and actions but not for those of your spouse or children. If you don’t set proper boundaries, you give up what makes you a complete person and rob your spouse of the mature companion that he or she deserves to have and prevent your children from growing up. Setting boundaries is not easy but necessary.