

LESSON 1: ROLES IN MARRIAGE

Part 1

Leah's Story

Leah squatted in the doorway cleaning vegetables for dinner. Every now and then she would nudge the hammock where her baby was asleep to keep it swaying back and forth. Her mother-in-law lay on a bamboo mat nearby snoring softly in the afternoon heat. Leah had only been married two years and already her life was very different than she expected. She felt old and tired. She missed her friends and wished she could visit her mother and father. Instead she had to care for the baby and keep house for her husband's family.

Leah knew her mother-in-law would expect everything to be ready for dinner when she woke up. Leah stretched and rubbed a sore place at the back of her neck. When she and Timeus were first married, he sometimes came home from work early and they would go for a walk or take a drive on the motorbike. Now he always stayed out late with his friends. He came home smelling like alcohol and cigarettes and barely said a few words before going to bed.

Leah had met Timeus at the church youth group. Before they were married he seemed to like going to church. She imagined that he would be a good husband and a good father. Timeus wasn't cruel. He didn't hit Leah and she knew he didn't go out with other women, but his heart was always far away. Even on Sunday afternoons when he was home he seemed distant. He never played with the baby or talked with Leah. He only slept or watched TV. If the baby cried or if his mother complained about Leah, Timeus argued with Leah and shouted at her. Leah began to wish she had never gotten married. She never imagined that life could be so difficult.

Timeus' Story

Later that same evening Timeus sat drinking coffee with his friends. Baara was telling a joke about women that made them all laugh. Timeus thought of Leah and shivered. He knew she would be waiting for him when he got home and that she would be angry. She was never happy. She always complained about Timeus' mother and about all the work she had to do around the house. Timeus knew his mother could be difficult, but he wished Leah could be more patient. His mother had worked hard all her life and she deserved to rest now that she was older. Leah should understand that.

Timeus had started staying out with friends and finding excuses to be away from home because he didn't want to listen to all the arguments between Leah and his mother. He was tired of Leah's complaints about her work and the baby. She always seemed so angry with

him. Didn't she understand that he worked all day and he just needed to be quiet and rest in the evening?

He even avoided going to church with Leah. He hated pretending like everything was fine between them. Whenever they went to Sunday morning services Leah dressed up the baby and ironed Timeus' best shirt. It was as if she wanted everyone to believe they were prosperous and happy. The truth was that they struggled to make enough money and were never happy at home. Timeus had started to wonder if anyone was really as happy as they pretended to be. He felt so discouraged that he didn't even want to go to church anymore. He wasn't sure there was any meaning to it. He never imagined that life could be so confusing.

- What happened in these two stories?
- How does this compare to families in our community?
- What advice would you give to Leah? Think about what Timeus needs: what could she do to look after Timeus better?
- What advice would you give to Timeus? Think about what Leah needs: what could he do to look after Leah better?

Part 2

Read Ephesians 5:23;25 & 28-29; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and Philipians 2:1-8 and answer the following questions:

- How do each of these verses describe God's love?
- How can a husband show love for his wife in these ways? In your groups come up with 10 practical things that a husband could do to demonstrate this kind of love for his wife.
- If a husband treated his wife the way the Bible teaches, what effect do you think it would have on a marriage?

Part 3

Read Genesis 2:18, 20.

- How does God describe the woman?
- How would you define a 'helper'? What things does a helper typically do?

Read Deuteronomy 33:29 and Psalm 121:1-2.

- Who is our helper in these verses?
- How would you describe the helper in these verses?

Read Ephesians 5:22,24, 33; and I Peter 3:5.

- What do these verses say about the role of the wife?

Read Proverbs 31:10-31.

- Who were these verses written about?
- Who were the verses written to?
- List what activities this wife is doing
- Which activities are common for women to do in your area? Which aren't typically allowed for women to do in your area?
- Why is this woman being honored?
- What activities does your wife do? How do you honor her?

Love and Respect

Read Ephesians 5:33.

- What does this verse show us about the roles of husbands and wives in a godly marriage?

Remember the story of Timeus and Leah.

- How do you think the problem of love and respect is reflected in this story?
- What advice would you give Timeus?
- What advice would you give Leah?

With a Partner

1. Make a list of things that your husband or wife does to help you. (For single people, what do your father and mother do to help you?)
2. Looking over the list, pray and thank God for your husband or wife (or parents).

Personal Reflection

What can you do right after this training to improve your relationship with your spouse or family?