

From “Changing Woman” To Christ-like Woman
The Sanctifying Work of Jesus Christ



A discussion paper:
*Revealing the unscriptural and destructive role
of the demonic entity “Changing Woman”
within marriage among tribal peoples.*

*Reaffirming the biblical role of man and woman
within a Christ-like marriage.*

Introduction

So many families are falling apart. Maybe yours is one of them! Children are getting into trouble in ways their parents never thought could happen. There's no easy fix, but sometimes looking at how things got this bad helps motivate us to look for ways to make drastic changes.

Every culture has good as well as harmful ancient traditions — ways that help *hold families together* and ways that *hold them in bondage*. Since traditions often stem from the very beginnings of a people, we're going to look at two very different stories of how things began: the biblical account and the Navajo account.

Sadly, few of today's young people are aware of this part of their heritage. But this one factor of how everything began dramatically influences a culture in ways most people can't imagine. For instance, your culture's creation story not only describes how life began. It also tells how men and women are supposed to interact with each other, especially in their home. Why is that so important? Because *the way* mothers and fathers take part in their children's upbringing will affect what kind of adults they'll become.

The *way* husbands and wives carry out their roles is affected by their culture's creation story. Sometimes these roles are controlled by ancient taboos which *inspire fear* rather than promote love. We're going to look at the relationship between men and women as it has been passed down from the creation accounts. First we'll review the biblical account and issues which affect the relationship between men and women. We'll then discuss the Navajo account of creation and its effect on their culture. (You may be familiar with the creation accounts of other cultures and find certain similarities. The gender roles in other ethnic groups may be similar as well.)

The creation account among traditional Navajo differs vastly from the biblical account. The Navajo story emphasizes the importance of the teaching of "Changing Woman" and her profound influence on the culture over many generations. This feminine domination is so deeply rooted that few Navajo men and women, especially those who are married, can follow Jesus as Lord of their lives if they cling to Changing Woman traditions. This conflict between the two sources, Changing Woman's influence and biblical creation and gender roles, has found most Navajo rejecting the God of the Bible.

Some have tried to reconcile their Christianity with the teachings of Changing Woman. But this has resulted in a heavy focus on Christian *form and ritual* rather than on a genuine relationship with Christ as His loving follower. Sadly, those who are "Christian" *in name only* can never know the character of Jesus within themselves. Nor can they serve Him in His Kingdom to bring Him glory. That takes wholehearted devotion to Jesus alone as their Lord through His indwelling Spirit. People who acknowledge or worship *any other deity* or influence can't belong to Him. The God of the Bible is jealous for the love of His beloved!

Let's review the biblical and Navajo creation accounts to better understand the tension Navajo men and women experience if they're to truly follow Jesus.

PART 1. Biblical Account: Creation Of The First Man And Woman

The Bible begins with Genesis, the account of creation: from the heavens and earth to the plants and animals to finally God's chief handiwork, humanity. God created male and female human beings in His image to enjoy a *love relationship* with

them. He enjoyed their companionship, and walked and talked with them in the Garden of Eden that He had prepared to be their home.

If you believe in the *One True God* of the Bible, then both the creation account *and* God's purpose for man and woman must guide your understanding. And if the biblical narrative is truth, then other accounts must be false.

If you believe the *Bible* to be God's source for what is true, then what it teaches about the roles of man and woman and how they raise up the next generations will be affected. How firmly you hold to these truths will determine how purposeful you are to instill loving obedience to Lord Jesus in your children. Let's look at how humanity came into being.

The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being....

*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. **I will make a helper suitable for him.**" Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame (Genesis 2:7,18-25).*

In His infinite wisdom God did not evolve mankind from other creatures. Instead, each type of life was specifically created by Him *after its own kind* (Genesis 1:11-25). Each was unique, and He designed each one according to His plan. Yet out of all He created, only humanity was made "in His image" (Genesis 1:27). Only mankind was capable of a loving relationship with Him — a love that the Bible shows He proved time and again.

Demonic Disruption Of The Marriage Relationship

Life in the beautiful garden should have been wonderful for the first couple. They were loved by their God, Who had given them rule over all that He had made (Genesis 1:28). All their needs were abundantly met. Meaningful work filled their days. Their relationship with each other was satisfying and joyful. However, the chief of the fallen angels, Satan, despised both them and their God. He devised a deceitful plan that would shatter the intimacy the man and woman shared with their Creator. Satan would tempt them through their *freedom to disobey*.

God hadn't created Adam and Eve to be robots but to be his loving children. He had placed for their well-being a single limitation on them so that out of their *love for Him* they might choose obedience. Their Creator even made clear the terrible consequences if they chose to disregard His command.

*And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were **pleasing to the eye and good for food**. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.... And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but **you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die**” (Genesis 2:9,16,17).*

This loving God did not want the people He created to know evil. Everything He had created He had declared *good* (see Genesis 1). But Satan, the crafty serpent whose name means “Accuser”, seized his opportunity. His tactic? To entice them into evil *through a lie*. Jesus describes deception as a chief weapon in Satan’s demonic arsenal: “*When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is **a liar and the father of lies***” (John 8:44b).

The is the account of how the first couple deliberately turned from their Lord’s command in order to satisfy their desires *apart from His will*.

*Now the serpent [Satan] was **more crafty** than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “**Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’**” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but **God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’**” “**You will not surely die,**” the serpent said to the woman. “**For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be LIKE GOD, knowing good and evil.**” When the woman saw that the **fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves** (Genesis 3:1-7).*

God had filled the Garden with all kinds of trees that were beautiful to look at and full of tasty fruit. But Satan is a deceiver, a master at twisting the truth. He questioned Eve why she and her husband weren’t supposed to eat from *any* tree in the garden. That was a lie! But it was enough to kindle doubt in the woman. She responded to Satan with another lie: that they weren’t even to *touch* the forbidden tree. By choosing to believe Satan, she opened herself to the very goal that had gotten Satan kicked out of heaven: the desire to be *like God*.

Eve’s independent thinking became a generational bane to all women to come. The woman was tempted by pride to rule as an equal with God. She wanted to know what was evil as well as what was good, so she talked herself into doing what *seemed good in her own mind* but was forbidden by God. Since the fruit looked appealing and could make her wise, she eagerly ate it. Note that her husband was with her; he could have spoken up and refocused them on obedience to their God. But he didn’t. Without a word of protest he ate the fruit she gave him.

But notice the difference. Adam wasn’t *deceived* as Eve had been. He *intentionally disobeyed* the direct command of his God. Their eyes were indeed opened as the serpent had promised, but what they saw produced fear and shame.

The Curse Of God On All Mankind

The God of the Bible is both loving and holy, full of mercy as well as justice. Adam and Eve had violated His command to not eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their willful disobedience reaped tragic consequences for both them as well as for all mankind — a curse that's been passed along from generation to generation ever since.

Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" [Obviously God knew but was giving the man a chance to confess his wrongdoing!] So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" [Another opportunity for the man to confess, but again he refused.] Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." [He refused to admit his guilt and instead made excuses.]

And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." [She too refused to take responsibility for her guilt.] So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.'" And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living (Genesis 3:9-20).

Not only would their lives be marked by pain and the decay of death. Their very inclination would be to sin. Look back at how Adam responded to God's questions. The core sin nature of males is to **blame** and **give excuses** when confronted with wrongdoing. Adam even *blamed God* for having given the woman to him! On the other hand, the core sin nature of females is the **desire to rule her husband** and **exercise independence** from him and his rule. Eve had already exercised independence from God's command, and had "ruled" over her husband by handing to him the forbidden fruit to eat.

Recognizing the reality of the sin nature in men and women is vital to understanding the Navajo creation account. As we'll discuss, the teachings of Changing Woman embrace both the sinful tendencies *and* the curses to make for the people a taboo-filled way of life.

Biblical Accounts Of The Curse Effects *The Queen Of Heaven and Her Destructive Influence*

The Bible triumphantly declares how God miraculously brought the Israelite people out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. He loved them as a treasured possession and called them apart to be His very own (Deuteronomy 7:6). However, time and again they were unfaithful to Him, particularly in their worship of a goddess called the “Queen of Heaven”.

Power drives this demonic entity. The Queen of Heaven demonic spirit pursues both the *power to destroy* (as the goddess of war) and the *power to control* (as the goddess of sexual prowess and fertility). Whole families of Israelites came under control of this demon as the wives and mothers encouraged their husbands and children to take part. Even their political leaders had deserted the One True God of Israel and turned to this evil demonic being. From God’s perspective, their unfaithfulness was **spiritual adultery**.

The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven... “We will certainly do everything we said we would: We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and will pour out drink offerings to her just as we and our fathers, our kings and our officials did in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. At that time we had plenty of food and were well off and suffered no harm. But ever since we stopped burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have had nothing and have been perishing by sword and famine.”

The women added, ‘When we burned incense to the Queen of Heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did not our husbands know that we were making cakes like her image and pouring out drink offerings to her?’...

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: “You and your wives have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands, saying, ‘We will surely keep our vows that we have made, to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and pour out drink offerings to her.’” You will surely keep your vows and perform your vows!’ (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19,25).

The Israelite women, unopposed by their husbands, called upon the Queen of Heaven to provide for them and protect them. (As we’ll discuss, Changing Woman and the Queen of Heaven serve the same role.) Several generations after their deliverance from Egypt, the spiritually adulterous Hebrew women had ignored the Exodus account of how God had sustained their ancestors for 40 years in the desert. They disregarded His promise of blessing if they obeyed His commandments, and ignored His warning of curse if they disobeyed (see Deuteronomy 28). These women were not only *deceived*. Their *cowardly husbands* refused to confront them about their sin — the same sinful pattern between Adam and Eve. Grasping the power offered them because they had no godly male headship, these women enticed their husbands and children to worship the Queen of Heaven demon with them.

Worship of the “Queen of Heaven” demonic being is soundly condemned by God, yet a form of this has continued among Roman Catholics. A *spiritual counterfeit* of Mary, the Jewish woman who birthed Jesus, was declared to be the “Mother



of God” in the 5th century at Ephesus, Turkey. (The city of Ephesus had been home to a lavish temple to the goddess, Diana, one of whose titles was also “Queen of Heaven.”) The emphasis on Mother *of God* places this counterfeit Mary entity *above* God (who is a male figure), in the hearts and minds of people — the same goal that Satan had for himself.

In Roman Catholic doctrine, Mary is the Mother of God who shows mercy, the ever patient mother, the protectress of humanity — especially women and children. During the Middle Ages Mary was often portrayed *forever holding the child Jesus*. The King of kings and Lord of the universe was framed in people’s hearts as a clinging little boy dependent on His indulgent and protective mother.

This perpetual “majestic mother and needy child” image was nothing new. Long before the incarnation of Jesus, the Egyptian fertility goddess Isis loomed over her son Horus, a sun god. The Greek goddess of fertility, Demeter, was revered as the protectress of home and marriage, and was often pictured with her dependent young daughter Kore.



Do you see how effective are Satan’s schemes to disrupt God’s plans for husbands and wives? Even before Isis and Demeter and Mary, the sinful human nature fashioned saintly mother and child icons and placed them in sacred shrines for worship and adoration and prayer. Only the names have changed! To worship, adore, or pray to any goddess image and her teachings is to *embrace the curse of God*. We’ll discuss how to overcome this particular curse, which is the desire of women to *rule over their husbands* as independent operators. But first, let’s look at other biblical examples of the curse of feminine rule.

Jezebel—The Curse Carried To The Extreme

When a nation lives in obvious ongoing sin against God’s commands, He speaks through prophets to warn the people. He also places them in difficult circumstances to bring them back to Him. If after these measures they still refuse to repent — to *turn from their wicked ways* and humbly seek God — they suffer yet another consequence for their rebellion: “*My people — children oppress them, and women are ruling over them. My people! Your guides lead you astray and obliterate the paths you should follow*” (Isaiah 3:12). This scenario was the case during the time of King Ahab’s reign in Israel. But keep this in mind: *his wife Jezebel* was the real power behind the throne.

Haughty Queen Jezebel was known far and wide for her ruthless domineering spirit. The daughter of a pagan monarch, she viciously slaughtered many of the prophets of God (1 Kings 18:4). So fearsome was her vengeful reputation that even mighty Elijah, who had been used by God to destroy Jezebel’s false prophets, fled from the evil woman in terror (1 Kings 18:40)!

Keep this point in mind. In order for a woman to rule over her family, men must fail to fulfill their God-given responsibilities. Remember Adam’s sinful response when he was confronted by God? He gave excuses and ducked responsibility. It was because of Ahab’s childish dependence on his wife that Jezebel controlled the tribes

of Israel through her schemes and witchcraft. He had only to whimper to her and he knew that she'd come up with a way to meet his desires.

Take, for example, the incident of Naboth, a righteous Hebrew and subject of Ahab. (The account is found in 1 Kings 21.) Naboth highly valued his ancestral vineyard, which unfortunately was located near the palace in view of the covetous king. When King Ahab asked for the property, the man firmly refused to sell it. The sulking king whined to his wife, who responded like an indulgent mother with a spoiled child. Using the king's seal of authority, she hatched a plan to defame the innocent landowner, have him killed, and snatch the vineyard. Yet the consequences that befell their children were severe: every male in Ahab's family was killed. There would be no successor to continue his line (2 Kings 10:7-11).

Like Jezebel, many married women take control whenever their husbands fail to fulfill their Biblical responsibilities. Subtle weapons of *manipulation and control* are wielded by women who rule their homes. How might you recognize this control? The wife responds with *passive-aggressive* behavior, that is, she sulks when she doesn't get her way. When her husband corrects her or disagrees with her wishes, she may withhold affection from him or act in ways she knows will irritate or anger him.

This kind of control pattern often begins when a wife *makes excuses* for her husband, or *hides things* about the kids from him. Like Jezebel with Ahab, she gives up being the man's wife and begins to *mother him*. And he either doesn't realize he's being manipulated, or gives up trying to head his household. After all, there's a certain feeling of safety in hiding behind his wife.

Dominant Older Women Are The Queen Of Heaven's Best Allies

Older Women hold within their power a great potential to bless their families. They can focus the next generations on the one true God and His commands, and role model a life of loving and obedient trust in Jesus. Or, they can destroy their families by passing along manipulation and control to their daughters and granddaughters. You may wonder how they can exert such influence on their families, especially among the females.

One older woman in particular stands out horribly for carrying her lust for control to extreme. Athaliah, the power-mad queen mother in 2 Kings, chapter 11, brutally slaughtered her grandchildren so that she herself could rule. Older women who have to *control* are driven from within by darkness just as wicked Athaliah was. But rather than wielding a sword, today's older women *use their mouth* to coerce or urge their daughters into sinful choices and selfish ambitions. The consequences to the children and grandchildren are just as painful and devastating.

The mouth can be an instrument of truth, healing and encouragement if used by the Spirit of Christ. But it can also be a source of hurtful deceit as it pours out the venom of bitterness and discord and wicked counsel. How many women today have urged their unmarried pregnant daughters to abort their babies? How many have spoken ill against their children's spouses? How many have tolerated negative phone calls from their adult children against those spouses and advised yet another family-destroying divorce?

The Queen of Heaven demonic spirit has found readily available recruits among older women who have no fruitful purpose or meaning for their lives. So many seniors in the past few decades have lived to *gratify their own desires* and whims. But a life of personal pleasure flies in the face of being available to fulfill God's purposes. By their persuasive words these women have shattered their own families by breeding disloyalty and estrangement among their children and grandchildren.

Among the kings of ancient Judah was righteous Asa. He realized how powerful the ungodly influence of his grandmother Maachah, the queen mother, might be. In outright defiance of Asa's zeal for the God of Israel, this woman publicly erected an obscene image of the pagan mother-goddess Asherah. Ejecting his wicked grandmother from her position as queen mother, Asa cut down the wooden image, and crushed and burned it by the Kidron Brook outside Jerusalem's wall. He made sure his grandmother's evil idolatry would have no more influence on God's people!

Older women who just give up and accept the painfully wrong life choices of their children and grandchildren are no help. If you're a follower of Jesus and a grandmother, you can purposefully discover just how much our Father wants to intervene on your family's behalf! You can earnestly fast and pray that your family's companions in sin will turn away from your loved one. You can confront your grandchildren with loving firmness to turn away from their poor choices, humble themselves and call upon Lord Jesus for mercy. And you can make sure you don't enable them to continue in sinful irresponsibility. Don't offer them a place to stay when they're determined to pursue destructive ways and choices.

God does indeed have a wonderful purpose for older women. Authentic loving trust in Jesus wonderfully sustained Lois, the grandmother of young Timothy the apostle, as well as his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). Under their godly influence the young man enjoyed a good reputation among others in his area who also loved Jesus as Lord of their lives.

Never discount the righteous influence a godly grandmother (or mother) can have on the lives of those she wants to train to please God and bring Him praise.

"Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but teachers of good things.

Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled and chaste, homemakers, to be kind, subject to their husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5).

Older women are presented only two choices: to serve God wholeheartedly or give in to the self-serving Queen of Heaven spirit. Those who choose to ignore His plan for their lives as a godly resource for younger women will end up serving the demonic Queen of Heaven who caters to their fleshly desires. God has a holy calling for grandmothers and all older women who love and follow Jesus as Lord: to role model and intentionally teach their daughters and granddaughters how to *love* their husbands and family. In that way their families will experience God as these older women live as His hands and feet and heart.

**God's Design For Marriage:
*Grow In Christ's Likeness Together***

From the very beginning, God had a special purpose for uniting the first man and first woman in marriage. He intended for the two people to be united as one to picture *His spiritual union* with those who love and serve Him! There's an inseparable link between the *joining together* of a husband and wife, and the *joining together in spirit* of someone indwelt by the Spirit of Christ.

The covenant of marriage is sacred in God's sight. A "covenant" means that you come *into union* with someone, that you're *one* with that person. The Covenant our Father offers you through the substitute death of Jesus on your behalf is an expression of His love for you. He's inviting you to a life of loving intimacy to *live in union with Him*. That union means a merging of your spirit with His Spirit. It's an ongoing journey of union with Him on earth until the time when your name is read aloud before the host of heaven.

That's why marriage is *permanent* in God's sight. He intended the *physical marriage covenant* to depict the *spiritual Covenant* He offers us through Jesus. The two most important relationships people will ever embrace are the Covenant of forgiveness and spiritual union our Father offers through Jesus, and the covenant of marriage that mirrors that intimate relationship. Nothing — no other relationships, no job, no possessions, not even cultural traditions — should compete or interfere with either your covenant in Jesus or your covenant with your husband or wife if He brings you a life partner.

Again, why did our Father establish the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman?

*Our Lord desires your **marriage covenant** to depict your **spiritual Covenant** with your heavenly Father. No husband or wife should claim a relationship with Father God that's greater than the love relationship others can see in their marriage insofar as that **love is given** through that person.*

God refers to Himself in a "marriage" relationship with His people. In the Older Testament our Father describes Himself as the "Husband" of Israel: "*For your Maker is your **husband** — the Lord Almighty is His name — the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth*" (Isaiah 54:5). The followers of Jesus are His bride, and He is heaven's Bridegroom awaiting her at the wedding banquet — another reference to marriage! "*Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the **wedding** of the Lamb has come, and **His bride** has made herself ready*" (Revelation 19:7).

The Older Testament ends with the prophet Malachi pronouncing God's judgment on those who broke their marriage covenant through divorce. Because so many today disregard the *permanent* nature of marriage, it's especially important that we understand *God's view* of this relationship. He *hates* the divorce that so shatters marriage covenants in this country.

*The LORD is acting as the **witness** between you and the wife of your youth, because you have **broken faith** with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your **marriage covenant**. Has not the LORD **made them one** [to live in union]? In flesh and*

spirit they are His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. 'I hate divorce,' says the LORD God of Israel, 'and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,' says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith'" (Malachi 2:14-16).

Did you notice our Father's purpose for the marriage covenant? He has made a husband and wife one "because he was seeking godly offspring." Children are the "fruit" of a marriage union, and these youngsters need *both* their father and mother to raise them. Just as in the physical realm marriage is designed to produce sons and daughters, so too in our spiritual "marriage" to Christ we are to "*bear fruit to God*" (see Romans 7:4). But godly fruitfulness doesn't just happen. Only by *guarding your spirit*, a command Malachi gives twice, can parents raise children who love God and obey His commands. That means *your* spirit must yield in willing cooperation with the *Holy Spirit*!

This next passage is especially for parents to see just how much they *need God* in the center of their lives in order to raise their children His way. We've added some notes in brackets to help explain each of the verses. You'll see that every moment you spend with your children is a *learning moment* if you listen to the Holy Spirit. Don't waste the time you have, nor get discouraged if you've blown it so far. God is *for* you and your family, so humbly call on Him to prepare both you and your kids to walk His way.

Love the LORD your God [love implies worship and obedient trust] *with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments* [the way of life that our Father has intended for our good] *that I give you today are to be upon your hearts* [don't just know them; live them!]. *Impress them on your children* [live uprightly yourself and intentionally discuss with your children how to live with other people in a way that pleases God].

Talk about them when you sit at home [at mealtimes and instead of TV or web surfing] *and when you walk* [or drive] *along the road, when you lie down* [talk and pray at a bedtime that's early enough so neither you nor they are too exhausted to focus] *and when you get up* [rise early enough to spend unhurried time with your kids].

Tie them as symbols on your hands [so that what you do is as though the Spirit is doing it through you] *and bind them on your foreheads* [so that your thoughts line up with those of Jesus]. *Write them on the doorframes of your houses* [so that your home is a holy place of refuge and a sanctuary for your family] *and on your gates* [so that each time you leave your home you purposefully represent Lord Jesus to others] (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).

Biblical Marriage Roles For Husbands And Wives: God's Chain of Authority

[The righteous Roman centurion told Jesus], "For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, He was

astonished and said to those following Him, 'I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great trust'" (Matthew 8:9,10).

The word "authority" has a sour meaning for many people because it's so often been abused. But our Father intended for authority to be a protective covering for all who live and work under it. He wants people to find *freedom within the boundaries* that His Word has established. God holds responsible whomever He gives authority to, whether it's a parent, a boss, or a government official. And He calls for those who lead to serve in the *best interests* of the people under that covering (see Romans 13:1,2).

The primary responsibility of someone who is serving in authority is to maintain *shalom*. A Hebrew word rich in meaning, *shalom* speaks of fullness, peaceful harmony, and the well-being of the Lord in your midst. In fact, even the Hebrew letters for *shalom* mean "authority that keeps chaos in check."

Jesus showed the relationship between authority and peace when He sent His disciples out with this directive:

Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace [shalom] to this house.' If a son of peace [shalom] is there, your peace [shalom] will rest on it; if not, your peace will return to you (Luke 10:5,6).

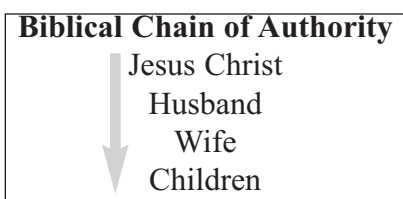
Some men can't or won't serve their family with godly authority to maintain peace their on behalf. But without leadership in a home, it won't be a place of rest and sanctuary for those who live there. Peace is an important work of the Holy Spirit within a follower of Jesus. In fact, it's also a key objective for a home. But peace calls for someone to serve the others in the home with authority to help them live in harmony with each other.

Biblical authority is the responsibility to:

1. **Include** those people or practices that **ble**ss your home or faith community with peace.
2. **Exclude** those people or practices that **rob** your home or faith community of peace.
3. **Commend** those attitudes or behaviors that **prom**ote peace in your home or faith community.
4. **Correct** those attitudes or behaviors that **rob** your home or faith community of peace.

So many homes today are broken and full of anger and disorder. No one is leading the family, and everyone wants their own way regardless of what's good for the whole household. But God's *chain of authority* for the home is very specific. That's so each family member can live peacefully within the boundaries and freedom He has given to each person.

Our Father calls for a husband/father to be the head of his household. This man is to provide for them and to protect his home from ungodly influence as he teaches them God's ways. As Paul explains it, "*I wish you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God*" (1 Corinthians 11:3). And he was writing to people whose culture was every bit as immoral and pagan as our own!



The apostle repeats God's design for authority in a home to the followers of Jesus in the heathen city of Ephesus: "*Wives are subject to their own husbands as to the Lord because a man is head of the woman as also Christ is head of the church, Himself the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives are subject to their husbands in everything*" (Ephesians 5:22-24, literal translation). The women there had to fight their sin nature's desire to be head just as women today have to! But to love Lord Jesus means that we willingly walk the pathway His Word commands, in the power of His indwelling Spirit.

To have peaceful harmony in your home, you need to first trust in His Spirit at work in *you*. As your family members see Him at work in and through you, they may be more willing to work at making their home a place of peace. You can help line up your family according to the chain of authority our Father has given followers of Jesus.

Each person has a *specific role* within your home. Let's first examine the purpose and role of wives according the biblical pattern.

A Woman's Christ-like Character As An Ezer

After God created Adam, He realized that it wasn't good for the man to be without a life partner. Adam needed a "*helper suitable for him*" — an *ezer* (EH-zer) (see Genesis 2:18). This Hebrew word implies that a wife *completes* her husband in areas in which he'd be weak otherwise.

Literally, the word indicates that she "answers to him." God supplies a wife as a beloved companion to come alongside and assist her husband, especially in time of need. But this is by no means a slavish position of weakness! The word *ezer* is used most often in reference to God as the One Who meets the needs of His people Israel. Therefore a wife's role as a "suitable helper" to her husband in no way implies she's worth less than he is.

People get married for many reasons, most of which are self-serving rather than self-sacrificial. But when a man and woman enter the marriage covenant with *pure motives of heart*, that wife is God's perfect person to complement her husband's weaknesses. If he had no weaknesses, he wouldn't need a wife!

We're discussing this from a biblically Hebraic framework. This perspective pieces together the ways of God from the Older Testament into the Newer Testament as a *continuing picture* of Who our unchanging God is. When you look at the Bible as a unified whole, marriage is a *journey together to grow into the likeness of Jesus*. If God's pattern of male leadership and loving example is followed, a couple's covenant becomes the arena for each of them to grow in the character of Jesus. The love of each partner will continue to deepen as the Spirit of Jesus changes the husband and wife to be more like Him.

An Ezer Chooses A Submissive Spirit

*Wives, likewise, be **submissive to your own husbands**, that even if some do not obey the word, they, **without a word**, may be won by the **conduct of their wives**, when they observe your **chaste conduct** accompanied by fear. [Don't keep nagging at your husband or belittling his lack of faith. LIVE the work of the Spirit in you and love him as God does!]*

*Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — rather let it be the **hidden person of the heart**, with the incorruptible beauty of a **gentle and quiet spirit**, which is very precious in **the sight of God**. [A gentle and quiet spirit doesn't worry or respond in fear. Keep your trust and dependence on our Lord Jesus strong; that pleases Him greatly!]*

*For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who **trusted in God** also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah **obeyed** Abraham, calling him **lord**, whose daughters you are if you **do good** and are **not afraid** with any terror. [The kind of love God gives has no fear in it; you're able to trust that He can work things out according to His wonderful, sovereign power.] (1 Peter 3:1-6)*

Submission is *not* a negative concept in the Bible. Christ always lovingly submitted to His Father to fulfill His will. Even as Jesus faced agonizing death to reconcile mankind to the Father, He could proclaim with utter trust and submission, "*Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet **not My will, but Yours be done***" (Luke 22:42).

To submit yourself as a wife calls for you to willingly choose God's order and design for marriage. He doesn't call you to submit to every man you meet — just to your own husband! And actions speak far louder than words. As long as he's not asking you to do something immoral, illegal or unbiblical, you're not excused from God's design if your husband isn't obedient to God's ways.

The indwelling Spirit of Jesus has given you power to both *love* your husband and *reflect* the deepening character of Jesus in you. You can *choose* to trust your heavenly Father within your heart and keep focused on His sovereignty. Nothing is beyond His power to intervene! (Obviously, He doesn't intend that you and your children stay in an abusive situation. But as far as the peace in your home depends on *your* attitude and responses, pray and follow God's biblical plan.)

The apostle Peter extols Sarah as an example of trust to women of all time. Concentrate as she did on growing a *gentle and quiet spirit* which is appealing in God's sight. In that way you can make yourself beautiful spiritually. Does this mean that you're supposed to be a drab, silent doormat? NOT AT ALL! Your personality isn't in question here, it's *your spirit*! And through your spirit you can control your mind, your will and your emotions so that you don't give way to worry and care that arouse fear.

Our Father spoke through His servant Peter that wives who trust Him should imitate Sarah by *obeying* Abraham her husband and calling him *lord*. That's quite a command, isn't it! Let's look at those two issues separately.

The idea behind the Greek word for obedience means *to listen with the intent of following through willingly*. Picture yourself as Sarah, dragged away from your comfortable home in Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 11:31) to spend the rest of your life wandering around the desert living under a goatskin tent. And yes, even being offered up to Pharaoh as his wife because your husband gave way to fear (Genesis 12:13)!

But do we get any indication from Scripture that Sarah doubted God's ability to rescue her and sustain her through all their journeying? No! (Her trust in His promise to bring forth countless descendants did waver regarding her yearning for a child. Yet she learned from bitter consequences that her maidservant Hagar's child was *not* God's plan to fulfill His word.)

Do you see the connection between Sarah's *trust in her God* and her *obedience to follow and support her husband* throughout their life odyssey? This is such an important point that we need to explore it fully.

Remember, the unholy lust to *be like God* in power and rule led Eve to sin in the Garden. Because she gave way to that deceit, God cursed all women with a desire for control, as this paraphrase of Genesis 3:16 reveals: "*Your desire will be to **rule over your husband...***" That desire to control isn't confined to non-Christian women. A large number of believing wives were asked, If they had a choice of loving or controlling their husbands and families, which would they choose? 93% chose *control*. When they wanted something to turn out a particular way, they did *whatever they felt was necessary* to bring it about — even if it meant going against their husband's wishes.

Like Eve, Satan wants to seduce wives into thinking that they know better than their husbands. Perhaps in some areas they do. But this is no reason for a wife to control her husband and family. The real issue for a wife and mother is, Do your *husband and children* rise up to call you blessed (Proverbs 31:28) because you walk as the aroma of Jesus in *obedient trust* (2 Corinthians 2:15)?

Our Father has not called wives to be the head of their household, but to walk alongside her husband as his much-needed helper. You were joined in covenant union with your husband to become as one, but the two can have only *one head*. And He has planned since creation that the head of the woman is her husband.

Call Him "Lord"??

"Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him *lord*" (1 Peter 3:6). The same Greek word that describes our relationship with Jesus as Lord is the word Peter uses in regard to a husband being called "lord" by his wife. Doesn't that show you just how serious our Father is about His design of headship for husbands?

Thankfully, our righteousness before our Father is found through our *loving trust in Jesus* as Lord of our lives. But are His people soiling His garment by choosing to defy His Word and His order for our homes? The word used for lord refers to someone who *uses his authority for the good of others*. If someone is "lord", then he is in a God-given role to shield others from danger. That's why independent wives who ignore or fail to seek their husbands' input often make decisions that hurt the rest of their household. If a wife makes it hard for her husband to carry out the responsibility God has given him, then she'll have to bear the dire consequences of her willful pride.

If you're a Christian wife, you may be thinking, "I really do love *Jesus* as my Lord. But it's *this husband* I have such problems with!" Guess what! Our Father is sovereign. You weren't forced to marry this man, even if circumstances in your life at that time made it seem the best option. You are in a *covenant relationship*, and you should grieve in your heart about ever breaking that covenant — no matter what society or tradition or counselors or friends say!

Our Father created the brain of women to have fast-moving mental ability. That makes them both quick to come to conclusions as well as quick to take action. (Research has proven this out: The cord that connects the two hemispheres of the brain — the corpus callosum — is larger in women than in men. But while women are able to answer faster, their decisions may not be of God!)

Our Creator purposed that a wife submit to the slower mental processes of her husband. He may need more time to think, but he's better able to explain how he reached his answer. Because his wife can process information more quickly, a wise man will listen to her ideas and prayerfully consider them. He'll also appreciate the differences between him and his wife because through her he can weigh thoughts that are totally different than his own. And for followers of Jesus, their differences in *spiritual gifting* will also bring unique perspectives that need to be considered by both of them.

Earthly life is a testing ground for both genders' willingness to trust Father God and to submit to His ways. Trying to find a way around *His* way won't bring His people the favor that obedient trust does, nor the peaceful family life everyone longs for.

The Woman Eve Was Deceived; Are You?

If you're a wife, have you ever noticed that when you try to follow an idea that's contrary to your husband's will or God's plan, you end up with an awful mess? Eve chose to act independent of God's commands and her husband's leadership. She foolishly placed herself near the forbidden tree and its tempting, delicious-looking fruit.

Eve's *independent action* purposely strayed from the righteous command that her Creator had given to both her and her husband for their good. Her *independent attitude* led her to rebel. She gave in to the temptation set before her *to be like God*. Jumping out from her Father's umbrella of protection under Adam, Eve wanted life on *her* terms.

Like Eve who paused to listen to the lies of Satan, women who do the same thing today get into dangerous territory. If you don't take those tempting thoughts captive and make them like Jesus' (2 Corinthians 10:5), then you're setting yourself up to be controlled by them. If you choose to continue to stubbornly give way to temptation, you'll form a habit that's based on your rebellion. A *demonic stronghold* will become a fortress in your mind to negatively influence every aspect of your marriage relationship.

The most common demonic stronghold among women today appears to be ***Independence and Divorce***. This stronghold holds in its grasp rebellious, deceived wives. Perhaps this is why over 80% of divorces in the United States are initiated by women. A warning: Don't be one of those foolish women about whom Paul warns Timothy. A "silly, weak-willed woman" forsakes her husband's discernment and is impulsively swayed by all sorts of false religious teachings (see 2 Timothy 3:6).

Taking action *without having all the facts* is a dangerous tendency among many women. An example is Bathsheba, best known for her shameful affair with King David. But for our purposes, let's look at her conversation with her son Solomon's half-brother, Adonijah. Although David had promised that Solomon would inherit the throne, his son Adonijah cunningly turned the heart of the people to himself.

Only through the intervention of the prophet Nathan and Zadok the priest was Adonijah's sly plan thwarted.

After her son had been established as king, Bathsheba was secretly approached by Adonijah. He asked her to intercede for him to Solomon so he could marry David's final companion, Abishag. Not realizing that this would add fuel to Adonijah's claim as rightful heir, she went to Solomon with the request. Solomon saw right through his brother's scheme, rebuking his mother and ordering Adonijah's execution. (Study this for yourself in 1 Kings 1:1-2:25.)

Now, why would Bathsheba endanger her son's throne so willingly? *She was deceived!* She failed to seek counsel from those who were wise and had faithfully served her husband David. Bathsheba allowed herself to be manipulated, just as Eve had in the Garden. Do you see how essential it is for a wife to willingly *seek out and receive* the input that God has given to her husband so she can see the whole picture?

A certain "intercessor" teacher ministers among numerous Native American tribes. Her husband never travels with her. Sadly, her situation represents so many Native Christian women who are operating independently from their husbands. By their example, they are encouraging other women to do the same. Wives who rely solely on their own counsel and perspective are deceived. God created a married couple to *intertwine* their giftings and differences, not ignore the other half.

A Wife's Independence Produces A Begrudging Attitude And Fans Flames of Insubordination

A wife can choose to willfully refuse her God-given role as *ezer*, her husband's best-suited companion and helper. But there are hurtful consequences if she takes that road. She'll find herself holding onto grudges that will destroy her marriage. It's as though she's keeping a knife in her pocket to twist when her husband makes a mistake or says something that reminds her of past emotional battle scars. She must let go of these! If a married woman truly wants to live with her husband as a couple whose *marriage reflects Jesus's presence*, then she must let go of her distrust and her guarded emotions against him.

Withholding affection is one of those hurtful weapons that wives often use on their husbands. It's not as though the wife *openly* sins so that others can point out her transgression. Rather, a wife's coolness mirrors the control she's exercising to either punish him or to get her own way. The Bible calls this "insubordination".

Insubordination is a form of rebellion that originates in the heart. It isn't defined by what we *do*, but rather by what we *fail* to do. The insubordinate person *withholds* from others through intentional disobedience. For instance, if a husband corrects or rebukes his wife, she may retaliate by withholding a warm smile or hug. It's hard for anyone to accuse her of anything, because on the outside she didn't *do* anything. But insubordination is one of the most serious sins a wife can commit.

We're told in 1 Samuel 15:23 that "*insubordination is like the sin of witchcraft.*" Witchcraft is demonic in origin. It is the desire and the ability to manipulate things around you outside the will of God. Insubordination is a defiant attitude that grows like a cancer, causing you to act without any advice or counsel from others. Insubordinate disregard for God's law drove King Saul to seek a witch for guidance.

Insubordination is known as “passive-aggressive” behavior. You may be sitting down on the outside, but you’re defiantly standing up for your own will on the inside! It’s the worst of all prisons for people to try to help you out of because your most common response is, “What did I do *wrong*?” But your trespass isn’t what you *did*; it’s what you *withheld doing* that’s so wrong in our Lord’s sight.

A Quick Review

Jezebel walked forcefully and wickedly in Eve’s independence. She defiantly seized her husband’s role and power, striking fear into a generation of men. This woman whose very name conjures an image of evil combined her power grab with witchcraft, and in the process almost wiped out the prophets in Israel. Even the mighty Elijah fled in terror to hide from her wrath!

Now what is there in Jezebel that we today should beware? First, she devoted herself to foreign gods and persecuted people who followed the one true God. You may not be following another god, but do you really *trust and obey* the One Who has revealed Himself in the Bible and by His Spirit? Are you at peace with God and what is going on around you? If you are a wife, do you walk with a quiet spirit that pleases Him in relationship to your husband? Or, *do your control and manipulation cause your family to fear getting on the wrong side of you?*

Jezebel, like many women today who exercise control by their independent attitude, made decisions behind her husband’s back. She rationalized that it was “for his own good.” Do you also try to manipulate your own way because you think you know what’s best — and overlook our Father’s plan of male headship in the process?

We’ll come back to the next point in depth later but it ties in with our current topic. Among the Navajo it’s traditional for a young girl to undergo the *Kinaalda* [*keh-nal-DUH*] ceremony when she begins menstruating. It’s an initiation rite into womanhood. However, the underlying goal of the ceremony is to establish the girl’s right to authority as *head of her home* when she gets married.

Sadly, too many of these girls see themselves as independent operators, not recognizing the biblical requirement for their fathers to be their protectors. (Too few fathers realize they’re even supposed to protect their daughters from men’s lust!) Soon after her initiation into womanhood, the girl becomes a target for hormone-driven young men looking for easy prey. Wanting to be accepted, and delighted to be an object of desire, these gals often find themselves used and pregnant. Their sexuality becomes their means of control — a strategy that continues into marriage.

A speaker at a spiritual warfare conference once referred to a “madonna spirit.” This influence appears when a woman has children, then turns her devotion away from her husband to make her kids the total focus of her affections. In response, her husband seeks other outlets, even a lover.

Paul warns both husbands and wives to not deprive each other of loving intimacy (see 1 Corinthians 7:3-5). Satan delights to dangle temptation in front of a husband if his wife substitutes excuses for intimacy! When a husband is robbed of affectionate deference that’s withheld by his wife, it may not be sex he’s driven to. Perhaps work, hobbies or even alcohol will increasingly keep him away from home.

Only a humble yieldedness to cry out to our Lord in repentant trust can help an insubordinate woman. She must be willing to yield “self” on His altar in order for Him to bring about true heart changes, the kind our Father knows are real and overflow to her husband!

Every Husband Must Help His Wife Conquer The Curse Of Eve

It's an awesome responsibility that women have in their influence on their families! But it's the *husband* who needs to recognize the tragic effect of the curse of Eve in his wife and help her conquer it. That's the only way they can experience peace and harmony in their marriage as he helps her grow in the character of Jesus as a model for their children.

Our Lord Jesus set the pattern for the godly union of marriage as the Bridegroom of His Bride, the Church. Each person the Father has *called out of the world system* to follow Jesus as Lord until the end is part of His Church. As we mentioned earlier, His intent for husbands and wives is for them to faithfully *represent Him in the physical realm* as a picture of His loving and faithful relationship *with His Bride*.

Scripture is clear: Jesus is the Head, and His Bride is the Body. Just as He is the Head of every man, so is the man the head of his wife: “*For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man*” (1 Corinthians 11:3,8,9). As we've already discussed, that righteous pattern was shattered in the Garden of Eden. God had given authority over creation to Adam as the one He selected to name the animals. Eve was called Adam's “appropriate helper” because she was to come alongside him in the work God gave them to do in tending the Garden. By *creating the man first*, God was setting into place His pattern of relational order: Woman was designed to follow her man's leadership. She shared responsibility in the Garden work, and responded to her husband's unique human nature with loving support.

A husband is called on by God to help His wife be *sanctified* — to be set apart for God's holy use — and to grow in the character of Jesus. The sanctification of a woman by the Spirit at work in her removes her yearning to rule, control and manipulate. This is the most crucial facet of her transformation process into Christ's likeness!

This verse captures a key difference in the way most men and women sin: “*The sins of some people are obvious and go ahead of them to judgment, but the sins of others follow afterwards*” (1 Timothy 5:24). A man's sins, in general, are often open and obvious. Usually they aren't hidden but are readily observed by people around him through his actions.

On the other hand, the sins of women more often are in their attitude. This is why it's so much harder for many women to take ownership that they've sinned. *Control* and *love* can look the same on the surface, but the *fruit* which each produces in a family is entirely different. Control produces *apprehension* — uneasiness, worry, anxiety — in a husband and in the children. A woman who gives in to this kind of manipulative spirit leaves everyone on edge. In contrast, the kind of love that the Spirit of Christ gives produces *humility and servanthood*. That love brings about a peaceful home that's not ruffled by apprehension.

Keep in mind, the battleground in your home is over *who will rule*. If you're a wife, will you be in control, or will Jesus truly be your Lord through the headship He's given your husband? Headship in a home means that the one who is leading is worthy of deference. *Deference* means giving someone the honor and heartfelt regard that's due them. It's an *attitude of heart* that keeps you from offending anyone who has rightful authority. Having a heart of deference means you joyfully serve your family in the ways they need you to.

When you express *sincere affection* for your husband, he realizes he's important to you and to your children. Trusting your Father with this aspect of your life reaps great reward! Affectionate devotion grows as the curse of Eve *diminishes*.

When In Doubt, Wholeheartedly Turn To Jesus

If you're a wife who loves Lord Jesus but doesn't know what to do to change your relationship with your husband, call out to Jesus for help! Asking Jesus for help in loving trust is the crucial step if you long to be the *beloved suitable helper* our Lord wants you to be for your husband. By humbling yourself before Jesus in trusting prayer, you can receive the cleansing and power that only He can instill in both your attitude and your actions. You walk in His way of right living as it pours out through you from *His Spirit*. No list of do's and don'ts can empower you to change.

If you are living with but *not married* to a man who doesn't know Jesus as Lord of his life, then you need to separate. (If you both love Jesus as Lord of your lives, then seal your covenant in Him with marriage!) Your children need to see by example that the covenant of marriage is holy before our Lord. Living together apart from God's way of marriage continues for them the downward spiral of *uncommitted relationships*. And do you really want them to repeat the mistakes you've made? Again, only our Lord Jesus can make the change in their hearts to turn away from their own plans and ways. They can cry out to Lord Jesus just as you can so that HIS love and power deliver them.

Changes are definitely needed! But you'll never succeed in changing yourself in your own strength, hoping that any changes you make will be appreciated. That would be *manipulating* your relationships, hoping that maybe your husband and kids will come around. Control and manipulation are *witchcraft*, something God will never bless. Changed behavior *without a changed heart* is fruitless. A right heart with our Lord Jesus brings the Christ-like love that both partners need in their marriage, and a right way to live that can bring His power to bear in your children's lives.

Again, a wife needs to completely and trustingly turn to the Spirit of Jesus in her to change her heart. Only He can empower her to alter her view of her husband and reveal her own need for her heart to be circumcised (see Colossians 2:11). Our Lord isn't angry when anyone stumbles but then cries out to Him in repentant trust. Rather, He grieves over the love, joy, and peace a couple *is missing* in their marriage when they resist crying out to Him!

When a woman cries out to Lord Jesus with humble yearning to be the wife He wants her to be, He can change her innermost being. The more of Jesus in her response to her husband, the less of Eve's curse of independence and control!

Think about who the Bible calls “our mother” in our trust walk, Sarah. Her husband Abraham pulled a lot of boners in their marriage, even offering her up to Pharaoh’s harem to save his own skin! Yet she was able to keep her focus on her God. She didn’t demand her husband to change, Instead, she trusted that as she loved and served her husband as “lord” in their marriage, God would intervene on her behalf. (See 1 Peter 3:4-6.)

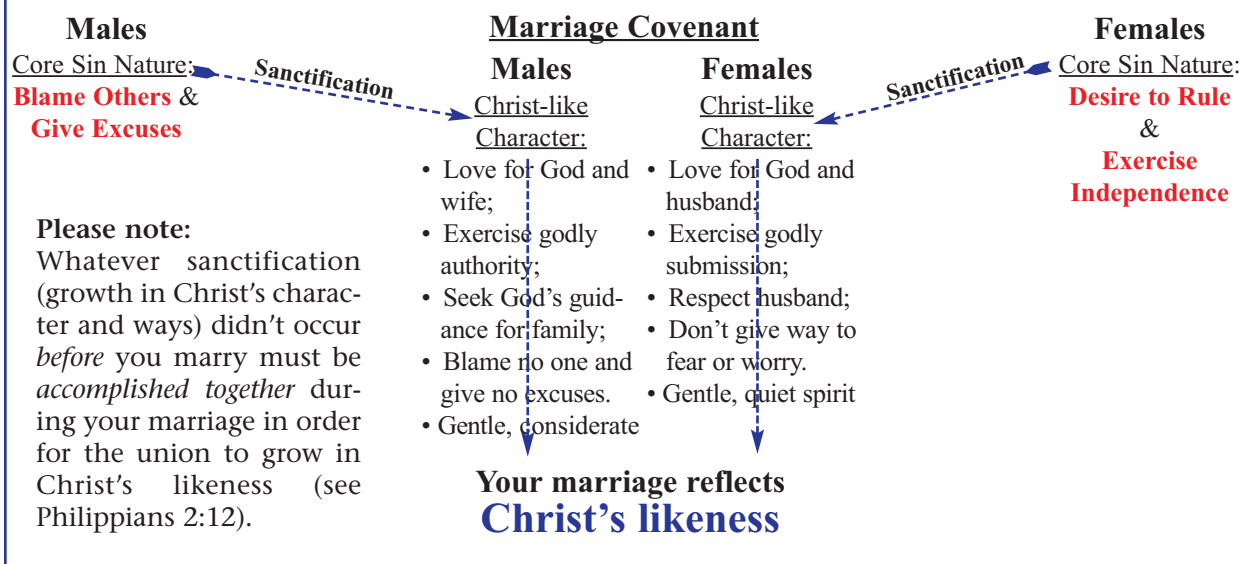
A wife’s walk in Jesus doesn’t depend on what her husband needs to do to shape up. She’s blessed if she gives up fear that things will never change, and chooses to cast aside the things the Spirit shows her are hindering her own spiritual growth. Even if her husband doesn’t change, her *perspective* of him will be altered. Then, with a heart that hopes in her Lord Jesus, she can give her husband the affectionate deference and companionship that pleases our Father.

It’s pretty clear by now that the God of the Bible Who has made Himself known through His Son Jesus is a God Who overflows with love. He has called and chosen those who will love Him and fulfill His Kingdom purpose: to be conformed to the *image of His Son* (Romans 8:29). We’ll be contrasting this God of His Word with a specific influence upon the Navajo people: being molded in the *image of Changing Woman*. We’re concentrating on this aspect of Navajo tradition because so many of the ceremonials and traditional practices revolve around this entity. The conflict between the two ways of life will be obvious, and may prompt you to consider any influences or traditions that were passed down to you from your own heritage.

Pilgrimage from the Curse of Eve to Christ-likeness



Sanctification of A Man and A Woman Is Necessary For A Christ-like Marriage Covenant



The “Queen Of Heaven” Among The Navajo — “Changing Woman”

At the Navajo Nation website, the *first topic* you encounter at the Home Page is the *Office of Miss Navajo Nation* (<http://www.navajo.org/govt.htm>), followed by other government websites. You may wonder, “Why is ‘Miss Navajo Nation’ so important?” When you click on her link, you’ll find the following explanation:

“In keeping with Navajo culture and tradition, the role of Miss Navajo Nation is to exemplify the essence and characters [sic] of First Women [sic], White Shell Women [sic] and **Changing Women** [sic] and to **display leadership** as the Goodwill Ambassador.

Miss Navajo Nation represents womanhood and fulfills the role of "grandmother, mother, aunt, and sister" to the Navajo people and therefore **she can speak as a leader, counselor, advisor and friend....**” (emphasis added)

The Changing Woman entity dominates both traditional and contemporary Navajo culture, particularly the roles within marriage and family. To begin, let’s start with the Navajo account of creation. As you read, you’ll see how much it differs from the biblical account. And as you’ll come to realize, Changing Woman embodies the curse of God that women will *desire to rule their husbands*. Changing Woman is to the Navajo the embodiment of the Queen of Heaven and Jezebel.

The Navajo Account Of Creation

There are many accounts of Navajo, or Dineh [dih-NEH], beginnings. All are complex, with details that don’t always agree. We’ll present the most commonly held views and their impact on the Navajo people.

Four progressive worlds existed within the earth before the emergence from the underworld into the Fifth World. Two very diverse kinds of beings existed alongside each other, and traditionally still do. The *Holy People* are unseen, supernatural and powerful. They are invisibly present within all ceremonial rituals *if these are done precisely according to traditional ways*. While these gods possess human emotions, the Holy People are not “human”. Instead, they’re more of an *idea* of what a god is. They can ward off both good and evil on behalf of mankind, but they can be dangerous if a person breaks cultural taboos. Interestingly, there’s *no sense of love* in the relationship between the Holy People and the rest of creation.

The second category of beings are the *Earth Surface People* — mankind. Among the Dineh (which is the Navajo name for themselves and means “the people”), mankind has no dominion over creation. Rather, all of creation is interconnected, and humanity is just another part of it. All living things have *equal importance*. For example, sandpaintings (also called drypaintings) are used during a number of ceremonies. In these paintings, elements of nature such as Thunder, Wind and Clouds are rendered in people form. There’s no break between mankind and things of nature; all are united. While mankind shares in the image of the gods, the Holy People, that image isn’t *human*. Humanity is just another interdependent form of life as are insects and plants.

All of life on earth’s surface is inhabited by the breath of the Holy Wind, which interconnects everything. Four sacred mountains encircle the Dineh land as a boundary and are the source of this wind. The sacred mountain to the east,

Tsisnaajini, is known as Mount Blanca in what is now Colorado. To the north is *Dibentsaa*, also in Colorado. The sacred mountain boundary to the south is *Tsoodzil*, called Mount Taylor and located in central New Mexico. *Doko'oosliid*, in the San Francisco Peaks near Flagstaff, Arizona, is the sacred mountain of the west. (The Navajo reservation of today, in fact, lies roughly within these boundaries.)

Remaining within the protective area of these four mountains is key to the Dineh way of life. The *Holy Wind Spirit* gives life, thought and speech to those who live between the 4 sacred mountains, unifying all beings whether animal, plant, clouds, or trees. Mankind cares for all these life forms and they in turn provide for humanity's needs. Since all living things have the breath of life through the Holy Wind, people must treat all life forms with respect. Man is accountable to the Holy People for how they treat nature. Since the Holy Wind is aware of all that occurs on the earth surface, the Holy People can hear and know everything that takes place here.

Order is an essential facet of Dineh life. The honored entity First Man organized time into orderly groupings such as day and night; winter and summer; the predictable motion of the stars and the regular moon cycles. All of these movements — solar, lunar and stellar — are of the Holy People and are able to influence human thought and conduct.

The concept of a powerful “medicine bundle” underlies both the origins of creation as well as the ongoing process of *restoring harmony through precisely conducted ceremonies*. The bundle began in the underworld with First Man before life emerged onto earth's surface. It caused the movement upward through the different worlds until the surface was breached. This powerful bundle contained objects that would be valuable to those who dwelled on the earth surface, such as 4 perfectly formed ears of corn, and soil from the 4 sacred mountains. The number 4 appears often in many aspects of Navajo life. For instance, there are 4 cardinal directions, 4 times of day and 4 key colors (black, white, yellow, blue) which are linked to the cardinal directions.

Changing Woman is introduced into the Dineh Creation story at a time when there was chaos and infertility. Monsters were terrorizing the earth surface, and only First Man and First Woman, who were old, and their two young children survived. How Changing Woman was created is disputed. In some myths, she is born from First Man's medicine bundle as he holds it upward toward Gobernador Knob in what is now New Mexico. In another legend, First Man climbs to the top of Gobernador Knob (*Ch'ool'i'i* in Navajo) in the midst of lightning and swirling rainbow colors. There he hears a baby crying and finds a turquoise figurine shaped like a female.

First Man and First Woman return to the peak together, where the Holy Wind transforms the figurine into a living deity. As First Woman holds the infant, she becomes the standard role for women to nurture and protect and guide all children. Anything that concerns sustaining and nurturing life therefore is the domain of women.

The child matures from infancy to puberty in four days (in some accounts this is 12 days). Because of this rapid transformation she is named *Changing Woman*. First Man raises and teaches Changing Woman all that he knows of rituals and ceremonies, and passes along to her his power and control. She is later given his medicine

bundle when she moves to the Sun's house in the West, where she creates the Dineh and all that they need to survive.

Changing Woman's Role in Creation

Changing Woman holds a place of power and reverence among both the Apache and the Dineh, and her characteristics are similar for each tribe. The most beloved and respected of the deities, she regulates the cycles of birth, maturity, aging, death, and rebirth in the spring. Through her come the seasons of life and everything that is necessary for a life of harmony with the universe. She's also known as *the deity most likely to help those who are in need of restoring their harmony and peace*.

Changing Woman represents fertility so that the Dineh people may continue. Everything that concerns reproduction and the ongoing nurture and sustenance of the Dineh comes from Changing Woman, with special emphasis on sheep and corn. She not only cares for physical needs but also for spiritual health and well-being through the most important ceremonial, called the "Blessingway".

Several accounts describe how Changing Woman established the specific Dineh territory and created the original Dineh clans. One of the most basic is her relationship with the Sun. Enchanted by her, the "inner form" of the Sun comes upon her as the mist envelops her. She becomes pregnant with twins. These boys grow to later become known as Monster Slayer and Born for Water. Each evening when the Sun sets, he returns to his beloved Changing Woman before continuing along again.

However, other than initially impregnating Changing Woman with the twins, the male Sun had no part of either creating the various clans nor of bringing forth the rest of creation. This is an important factor, since the *female nurturing side of life* focuses so largely on Changing Woman and relegates comparatively little influence by the male side of existence.

At some point Changing Woman journeyed to the West, where she found four mountains. These were identical to the four mountains located near where the Holy People first emerged from the underworld. Delighted with her surroundings, she danced on the tops of these mountains. Her dancing brought forth all that humanity would need to thrive: rain clouds to water the soil, which is the earth's "flesh"; beautiful woven fabrics and jewels; abundant plant life; and all animal life.

She then rubbed off the outer layer of her skin from various parts of her body. The skin flakes were transformed into men and women, which became the initial clans of the Dineh. She taught her people to appreciate all that she had created for their well-being and how to control it.

Because Changing Woman created humanity from her own skin and sustains them from all that she has made, she is the *first and foremost mother*. Anything that concerns reproduction and sustaining life is associated with her. She protects her children through certain precise ceremonies that guard them from evil forces as they pray to her. As the *ultimate nurturer and provider* she offers warmth and safety, particularly as her people pray to her for protection. However, she protects only those who dwell within the land that's surrounded by the four sacred mountains *and* who follow the Dineh way of life that she has ordered.

Changing Woman is recognized in the repeating cycle of the seasons. Life is *cir-*

cular rather than a straight line with a beginning and an end that marks western thought. The Christian perspective in particular presents life in terms of a straight line: birth to rebirth to death and eternity. Among the Dineh, though, *there is no concept of eternal life or punishment*. When the body no longer has the breath of life, it becomes one with the earth. As it decomposes, it rejuvenates Changing Woman as its elements become part of a new life form.

Hózhó: The Harmonious Whole of the Universe

Western thought — Christendom in particular — separates *secular life* from anything that's considered *spiritual*. Separating life into these two categories is a practice of the ancient Greeks and is called "Hellenist" or dualist. In contrast, *the Dineh never separate the spiritual dimension from other aspects of life*. In fact, there is no word for "religion". Rather, all of the universe is *interconnected* as a harmonious whole known as *hózhó* [hoh-zhoe]. *Hózhó* is the beauty and balance that exist within creation and connects all of life. The Dineh have no desire to operate singularly as individuals. Interdependent on social ties, harmony comes from being *connected to the order of the world* as Changing Woman represents it.

As the mother of all living, Changing Woman is identified *with the earth* as the provider and caregiver of her people. So the Dineh person is forever a child of his or her Mother Earth. The Sky is Father, and when all is in balance between Mother Earth, Father Sky and the People, there is *hózhó*.

To the Dineh all of humanity have both "male" and "female" sides within each person. The male side is the warrior side from which aggressive responses come, while the female side is peaceful. *Balance* is needed within a person to control these two very different responses. From a western view these would be in opposition, while from a Dineh perspective they work together.

Ceremonies Are Necessary To Restore Harmony

To control and balance both sides, *Changing Woman gave to the Holy People songs, prayers and ceremonies* which are rituals known as Blessingways. These rituals contained instructions about the correct way to live. To succeed, they can only be done by a *designated medicine man* in a very specific manner. Each Blessingway serves a particular purpose such as blessing a wedding or celebrating the birth of a child. The ritual often lasts for several days.

Each of the instructions, taboos and curing ceremonies are intended to restore harmony. When there is harmony within a person, then there is *hózhó*. For example, if there is a drought on the land, a person doesn't pray for rain. He finds the appropriate ceremony to adjust himself into having harmony *without* rain.

We mentioned that the Dineh approach to life is *circular*. That means there is no distinct line between the past and the present. Therefore, these prayers, songs and rituals are *actual reenactments* of the mythic accounts. They *draw power* from the Holy People if they are carried out exactly in the traditional manner. Again, if they are not done in the *prescribed way*, the ceremony will be ineffective.

The Blessingway is the most important Dineh rite. It's intended to restore harmony among the people by *drawing the attention of the Holy People*. While some of the

Holy People can be fearsome when they interact with the earth (like with lightning and heavy rains), *Changing Woman never harms her people*. As sustainer and protector, she is capable only of blessing her people through the intervention of her *trained practitioners*.

Because people are interconnected with the earth, the *medicine bundle* referred to earlier with First Man is a special object of blessing. Through his own personal medicine bundle a person can find peace and live a long and happy life with everything he or she needs. The power of the medicine bundle comes from its source: a *gift from Changing Woman* through the rituals she gave to protect her people from evil beings.

Evil is the opposite of *hózhó*, and is known as *høchxø* [hohnk-sho], disharmony and unhappiness. The ultimate evil that disrupts the harmony of the universe among the Dineh is this: *the witchcraft of trying to make a lot of money so you can buy many things for yourself*. The reasoning behind this disdain for selfish wealth points to how hurtful and disruptive is individualism among the People. If you get rich, you're taking things that belong to someone else. Even worse, you're hoarding and not properly caring for your relatives by sharing from your abundance.

If a Dineh is out of balance, it's because he has somehow broken a rule and needs the appropriate ceremony to restore harmony in his life. But this disobedience doesn't mean he or she can just pray for relief! *A specialized ceremonial practitioner must be brought in*, one who will do a ritual for him *exactly* as Changing Woman taught. Only then will the trouble will be ended and *hózhó* restored. The person who is seeking help through the ritual has no need to repent or even to cry out with a plea. All that's needed is the correct performance of the ritual by the practitioner.

Knowledge Contains Power

Knowledge is a powerful entity. It is transferred to others only at key stages of development, such as birth, puberty, and pregnancy. Even then knowledge can be shared only at an appropriate level since there are *many levels of knowledge* on which to build. Power accompanies this knowledge, and the learner must be prepared to receive it. Knowledge is also given according to gender, such as hunting and warring for men, and childbirth and weaving for women.

The power that is received from the practitioner is based on his knowledge of the rituals and ways given by Changing Woman to the Holy People. He is able to get in touch with them during the ceremony. For example, perhaps a person is out of harmony because of an illness. The practitioner uses a ritual to call on a stronger Holy Person to overcome the weaker spirit that's disrupting the person's *hózhó*. This is a powerful feat, but the practitioner must use his power carefully. Anyone who would use his knowledge to bring harm to others would find himself destroyed if he was discovered doing this.

Any time people have problems, they must deal with them according to the traditional ceremonies the ancestors used—the ones they were first taught by Changing Woman and the Holy People. There's a strong connection between a *personal object* such as a loom, basket, or hogan (traditional house) and *its maker*. These items possess the *power* of the person who made them. As each item was made, it received power from its creator, and all the more so with things used during ceremonial rituals.

There is power in knowledge; therefore some people are reluctant to give away much knowledge because they don't want to lose the power they have in it. A *fee* such as livestock, cash, or jewelry must be given when knowledge is received or for each ceremony's practitioner. The gift protects the person who is sharing the knowledge because giving away knowledge can shorten life.

Mothers and the Female Experience

Changing Woman is the *first and model mother* for all mothers to come. The *mother-child bond* is the closest in Dineh kinship since a mother is the one who nurtures and provides for her child everything it needs. A young girl is initiated into womanhood when her first period appears. This is a key moment in her life, for she can now *identify with Changing Woman* in reproduction and in caring for those in her family. Because this stage of her life is so important, the unique ceremony we mentioned earlier is held on the girl's behalf: the *Kinaalda*. During the ceremony, *Changing Woman's reproductive powers are transferred to the girl*.

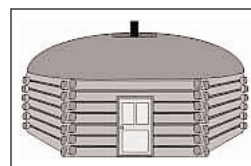
A specific Blessingway ceremony is conducted at both the girl's puberty rite as well as at her wedding. These ceremonies are a protective measure that must be repeated often throughout her life. If she leaves the reservation for a period of time, this ceremony that's specifically tied to Changing Woman is performed on her behalf when she departs and returns.

The Kinaalda is modeled after Changing Woman's own puberty rite. During this ritual, which lasts five days and four nights, Blessing Songs are sung. Ritual events take place so that the young woman will *walk in the ways of Changing Woman* as she passes from childhood to maturity. During this ceremony, the *spirit of Changing Woman visits*. The Dineh who are present can be assured that Changing Woman is still blessing them *as they live by her rules and ways*. At this time the young woman is also instructed by the older women of her clan in the responsibilities of womanhood such as sexuality, cultivation of the land, herbs and healing, and weaving.

As she celebrates puberty at her Kinaalda, the spirit of a young woman is especially able to be molded and shaped. All aspects of her life — physical, mental, emotional and spiritual — can be molded at this time into *the image of Changing Woman*. The girl is imparted special power to heal because she has *invited the spirit of Changing Woman into her life*. By passing along this power to bless her family and friends, she shows her willingness to be generous and to share all that she has.

An older woman who represents traits the parents want to see in their daughter guides the girl during the four-day ritual. During the process of molding, the girl lies face up in her parents' hogan home. As she stretches the girl, the selected older woman imparts to her particular skills, such as exceptional weaving or even prosperous business practices. The girl is stretched from the soles of her feet (the part connected to Mother Earth) to the top of her head (in touch with Father Sky). Then the girl returns to each guest any jewelry or items they've placed on her blanket for *her special power* to be imparted onto them, receiving great thanks for her kindness.

Most of the ceremony takes place in the hogan. As the practitioner chants, the hogan symbolically becomes the First Hogan of



First Man and First Woman. The guests who attend the ceremony become the Holy People. Each aspect of the ritual has special significance. The girl is dressed in garments like those which oral tradition says Changing Woman wore for her own puberty rite. *By being dressed in the image of Changing Woman, she'll be protected after the prayers and ceremony have ended.* Also, by wearing much jewelry she's hoping to ensure that she'll be *prosperous in the future.* Of special note are the moccasins the girl wears. *The sole of the moccasin represents Mother Earth, and the young woman is on earth to fulfill a life purpose.* Made of deerskin, these moccasins represent swiftness and quietness, traits that are transferred to the girl when she wears them.

Since Changing Woman molded herself and ran toward the sun creating songs as she ran, the young woman also *runs toward the sun* each morning of the ceremony. Not only is this ordeal like that of Changing Woman at her Kinaalda, it also shows how much the girl wants to be energetic and receive the help of the Morning Gods. On the last day the girl runs as far as she can, then blesses herself with moist soil so that *some of her reproductive power returns to earth for Changing Woman.* Each morning other runners accompany her from behind and yell so that the gods, especially the *House God*, will see her running. Since there is no similar function for males, *the house thus comes under the rule of the woman* since she has the ear of the House God. As one source put it, she runs to show that she's strong enough to bear children and to "settle her husband and *mold him the way she wants him to be.*"

The young woman must also prepare and bake a huge corn cake which everyone but herself eats. She's showing that she will be the *provider* for her family, again reflecting the *image of Changing Woman.* The cake is baked in the ground to connect the newly-fertile girl with *Mother Earth's womb.* The girl's "first blood" is sacred, and baking the cake in the ground transfers the girl's reproductive energy into the earth *to rejuvenate Changing Woman.*

If the cake has cooked properly (a process which takes all night), this proves that all the gods were present and that everyone who came was in balance with *hózhó.* Women with good character and abilities help her prepare this cake so that their traits will be imparted to her. If the corn cake does not come out right, then women of poor character and ability have taken part, and there is danger that the girl will become promiscuous. Any of the women who participate with the young woman in the ceremony must abstain from sex. Otherwise, it's feared that the girl will later commit adultery.

Just as Changing Woman offered her corn cake to the Sun, so does the girl with the first piece of hers. She then feeds her guests with the rest, reinforcing her image of Changing Woman as *provider and sustainer.* She's also *anchoring her position of dominance in her future family.* She's expected to give gifts to those who have shared in this ceremony with her. These gifts might be food, help with special tasks or chores, or anything that indicates she is *mirroring Changing Woman* in provision.

The Kinaalda finishes on the fourth night with an all-night sing ceremony. The songs are directed to Changing Woman and other Holy People, especially as the young woman *identifies herself with Changing Woman.* The young woman is blessed with pollen, then each person there blesses himself or herself with pollen and prayer.

Reinforcing her place as an interconnected part of the greater community, the young woman then receives their blessing.

Since everyone in the community knows that the girl has now become a woman, the young men may take special interest in her. Sadly for so many young Navajo women, they become easy targets for young men craving sex. Generations have fallen prey and ended up unwed mothers at a very early age.

The next significant stage of a traditional young woman's life is to find a husband. Just before the wedding the potential husband and his family bring gifts such as jewelry or livestock to the family of the bride. The wedding can take place *only if the mother of the bride* approves of the gifts.

The ceremony takes place in a new hogan specifically made for both the ceremony to be conducted and as a home for the bride. The guests and the couple sit in prescribed places in the hogan, and a number of rituals are performed. The bride and groom eat corn mush from a traditionally woven wedding basket to signify that their lives are joined together. The mush is sprinkled with pollen to symbolize the couple's hope for many children.

The third stage when a woman is especially open to be molded in the image of Changing Woman comes during pregnancy. Another Blessingway ceremony established by Changing Woman is conducted both during the third trimester of pregnancy as well as following the birth of the first child. *Every mother uses Changing Woman as her role model*, training her children as her ancient Creator did her sons Monster Slayer and Born For Water.

This ceremony is the only one in which Changing Woman is represented in a drypainting. Cornmeal, pollen and even pulverized flower blossoms are placed in a very particular way on a buckskin spread carefully on the ground. Some believe that as the drypainting is created, *Changing Woman brings life to it* in the form of the rain and the seasonal changes. Therefore, the ceremonial affects the whole community as well as the person for whom it's being performed.

Male Ceremony To Recognize Manhood

There aren't many significant celebrations in a man's life to parallel the Kinaalda of a young woman. When a *boy's voice changes*, he goes with the men into a sweat lodge for a 4-day ceremony, although this practice has diminished greatly in the past few decades. Sometimes war regalia are put on his shoulder for protection after the ceremony is complete. Traditionally, his initiation into manhood involved fasting, running to the East toward Changing Woman's direction of dawn, sweat bathing and learning songs. He would also be taught by older men about his future role as husband, father and grandfather.

The young man is especially directed to have *respect for his female relatives* and to restrain his sexual drive. [Note the difference between girls' and boys' ideal traits. Girls are instructed to be ambitious and industrious to *prepare as head of their household*. But unless men are hunting or warring, they have *no reason to work!*]

Few today undergo the entire 4-day ceremony in which the young man could learn from the wisdom of his older relatives. Many families now just have a simple Blessingway ceremony when the boy's voice changes. However, without ongoing

contact and instruction by the older men, the boys have *no model for manhood*. And without the training as in times past about hunting and warring (since there's no need for it now), *they have little purpose or meaning for their life ahead*.

Since a young man can't identify with Changing Woman and her life-giving and sustaining purposes, he is encouraged to display the courage of her twin sons, Monster Slayer and Born For Water. *The Sun originally tried to deny that these children were his*. But the boys made him proud by withstanding *numerous life-threatening trials he commanded them to do* to prove he was their father. He then gave them gifts that would help them to slay the monsters that were roaming the earth. Through their adventures the young men gained ceremonial power and knowledge which they taught the Earth Surface People. (Think about how distrusting a boy may be toward his own father if he perceives he *must prove his worth* through the example of some form of dangerous assignment.)

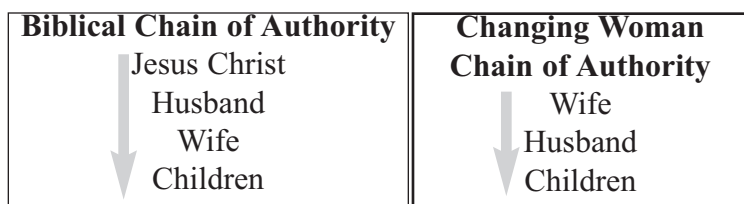
How Do These Beliefs Affect the Roles of Men and Women?

From a Dineh perspective, all of life and its environment are holy. The *land is Mother Earth (Changing Woman)* and the sun and moon represent Father. The whole *intimate womb concept of mother (Changing Woman)* can always be felt under your feet. That's why most ceremonies start with the soles of the feet and progress upward — emphasizing *Mother first*. They then move toward the person's head, which has a relationship with Father Sky but certainly not as intimately. The Sun and Moon come and go, but Mother Earth is always there pulling you downward in stability.

Since Changing Woman is responsible for producing and sustaining life, it's not surprising that *women have traditionally dominated the economic and social life* of the Dineh. They *head most family groups*, and the clans themselves are *matrilineal*. A family unit is organized around a *head mother who owns a particular tract of land* on which her family's sheep graze. As soon as the children are able, they are given their own sheep to raise. This way they can participate in the communal life of the extended family as they corporately raise their sheep. The community aspect is further reinforced as they share any sheep that is slaughtered; both the individual as well as the corporate family sense is strengthened by eating together.

As the *mother and grandmother of all living things*, Changing Woman embodies earth's power of rejuvenation to return to beauty and youth after the seasonal cycle of aging and decay. Like the stars, the life cycle continually moves so there is *continuous re-creation*. Note that *maleness*, however, is absent in creating and sustaining life. A man may be a good teacher and counselor, but he could just as likely be unreliable or undependable in his relationship with his children. Like the Sun, a father is often seen *irresponsibly cruising away* from home, choosing to *keep distance between himself and his children*.

Changing Woman ordained that maleness and femaleness would be complementary: the male for protection, the woman for peace, harmony and order. Blessing and goodwill represent



the right-hand female side, along with Blessingway ceremonials. The left side is protective, and protection ceremonies start on the left. But when the warrior role was abandoned under government enforcement, *men lost their protective purpose*.

[In all that we researched, we never came across anything that discussed *love* as an essential ingredient for either the relationship with the deities or between a husband and wife. As the most cited requirement for those who follow Jesus, love is markedly absent in Dineh accounts — the largest contrast to stand out.]

Among the Dineh are two levels of kinship. The "primary level" is the *Mother-Child bond* that Changing Woman so vividly pictures, as well as the *husband-wife bond* of Changing Woman and the Sun. The "secondary level" is less intimate, such as the *father-child* relationship and the sibling-sibling relationship. This lesser degree of closeness is seen in the common practice of Dineh children addressing their father as an *in-law (shaadaani)*.

A woman traditionally *owns and controls the hogan*, which is built on land *owned by her family*. She also *owns the children, the livestock, her jewelry, the blankets she weaves and proceeds from the sale of anything that's hers*. Her husband owns whatever he has inherited from his family and any goods he's bought from his own earnings. *A man never inherits the use of his wife's property*. It's passed on to her children or to the children of her sisters. If their mother dies, the *children remain with their maternal grandmother or aunt, or with their mother if she divorces*.

Changing Woman's Influence on the Home and Culture

There are two kinds of Dineh dwellings which serve very different purposes. The less common male hogan was originally designed for *planning and ceremonial purposes*. It wasn't used daily, as the men had to leave to carry out their plans for hunting or war.

The female hogan was for *birth, nurture and family life*, with such activities as eating and sleeping. This hogan is round, a shape ordered by the Holy People to depict the sun of Father Sky. The door always opens to the east so that each day the sun may be greeted. Traditionally the *hogan represents a mother*, actually having love and feelings; it misses you when you're gone.

"Breath" is represented by the hole in the center roof through which prayers rise. The interior of the hogan represents the *womb of Mother Earth/Changing Woman*, while the central fire pit is a part of the earth. This sense of *female connectedness* ties both men and women to Changing Woman. The home is the realm of women, *making the men perpetually "childlike" in their need for nurture, food and rest*. Therefore they generally don't confront their mother or wife. Instead, they're likely to isolate themselves by doing things (like drunkenness) that wouldn't be tolerated within the hogan.

Infants spend much of their first year in a wooden cradleboard modeled after the one used by Changing Woman for her sons. Each part of the structure is significant. The left side of the backboard represents Mother Earth, while the right side is Father Sky. These two split boards are anointed by songs and prayer as the cradleboard is being made. Loops to secure the child represent zigzag male lightning so the child is laced into a *protected Dineh world*. After all the children in the family have used the cradleboard, it's taken apart and placed under an outcropping or place where the

parts will be protected. [This practice is perhaps FEAR-based: the cradleboard is “part” of each person who used it and of the mother who made it, and it might be defiled by animals or rain or hail if left unprotected.]

Fear-Based Taboos: Teachings of the Holy People

Many of the traditional beliefs and taboos are surrounded by *fear*. The only ways to dispel that fear are to follow the rules precisely or hire a medicine man to perform a ceremonial that will restore your *hózhó*. The following taboos will give you an idea of the consequences for breaking them.

The place where your umbilical cord is buried is your true home. It must be *anchored to Mother Earth* or you’ll become antisocial.

Body parts are always identified with someone and are *vulnerable*, so you have a lifelong responsibility for your body fluids, hair, and nails. They should be burned to keep them from rats or birds where they’d be defiled or even used in witchcraft activities.

Most Dineh don’t question the directions of their elders or analyze their culture because, “That’s the way it is.” [Therefore, even though so many Navajo men live pretty much unproductive lives, there’s not a pressing urgency to change.]

Changing Woman never cut her hair or wore makeup because she needed no improvement. Her hair was composed of rain and cloud moisture, so if women cut their hair, the *land will suffer drought*.

Don’t create a pot or spindle or weaving fork while pregnant. These resemble parts of a developing body and the *baby may be deformed*. Avoid roadkill or the child will have a trait like the *animal that was killed*, such as a club foot like a bear. However, you can have a ceremony performed to undo the trait. An unborn child can be harmed if a parent is exposed to danger or to an eclipse.

Because of identification of *parts* of the body with the whole body, a baby’s first bathwater with the blood in it must be *gently disposed of* in a safe place, like at the base of a living bush. Don’t splatter it or the baby’s body will *suffer bruising*. A baby is especially susceptible to danger just after birth.

Some modern Dineh fear giving birth in a hospital setting and ask for shielding and protection prayers. A *difficult birth* can mean that the parents committed a taboo, so a ceremonial is needed. Offering pollen in front of a newborn indicates to the Holy People that a new life is “making tracks on Mother Earth.”

Since Changing Woman molded the first people to develop their personhood, *infants are molded* to prepare them for the challenges of their life journey.

The Holy People instruct a baby in the womb. When the child first laughs, the Holy People start to detach from the child. This event is celebrated as a joyous party to show the Holy People that the *parents will nurture the child well*.

Summarizing The Effect Of Changing Woman On The Navajo Family

Within the Navajo culture the women exercise authority. A hundred and fifty years of family-destructive federal government policies and broken treaties have further robbed men from having a say within their family. While the Navajo Nation’s own administrative system has men in leadership positions, with little opportunity

to carry over to modern life their traditional roles as warriors and hunters, generations of men have given way to irresponsibility in matters of securing provision for their families and in training their own children.

Oftentimes a wife's brothers are called upon to be more involved in training the children than even their own father. A husband is held so low in the relational hierarchy of the family that when his mother-in-law enters a room, he must leave. Little wonder that given the lack of dignity or purpose and meaning among men, the rate of suicide among Navajo males young and old supercedes that of the rest of America eightfold.

Contrary to the biblical framework, among the Navajo there is no concept of sin as a violation against a holy and loving God. The concept of working through interpersonal problems does not seem to be a process that's either modeled or taught. Rather, no matter what situation arises to disrupt the individual's sense of personal peace, they either go to a shaman to restore their peace through a prescribed ceremony, or else live with begrudging bitterness toward the offender.

Only through the cleansing, forgiving and healing work of the Spirit of Christ in the heart of each person can true freedom grow in the hearts of the captive. We earnestly await our Lord to raise up those who will bear His life-giving Covenant Gospel of the pilgrimage to salvation among the Navajo.

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