



How Crucial are Women to a Biblical Household? Very!

Description



US Military rank Insignia: Commander,
Captain, and Admiral

This article is sort of a follow-up/spin-off to my article [What's the Best Bible Translation? And More Importantly, Why?](#) In that article, I make the case that the Bible primarily uses masculine language addressed to men.

A few days ago, a woman left a comment on that article, and her comment said in part: *(you can read her full comment by clicking on the above link)*

With all of the stress on the gender of the words, it makes me feel like.. I don't know.. does God not love women, too? Or does He not love women as much as men? Aren't we just as much the children of God? Is it just a boys club that I'm not welcome in? Are women really just the property of the men in their lives and not their dearly valued helpers?

These sort of questions don't come from a place of offense, but more a place of rejection. It makes me sad. I deeply crave for the love of God, but when it seems so much like I was never made to receive His love, when it seems like so much of His attention is directed only to men, I feel like the child left out.

First, **I'd like to thank her for leaving this comment.** I didn't realize that my comments on gendered language in the Bible would come across that way. (*I'll add a link to this article in my article on Bible translations to prevent more misunderstandings.*) To clear things up, I gave a short reply to her comment and then sent her a longer email explaining why (*in my opinion*) God uses so much masculine language in the Bible. **I would also like to clarify up front that this is for the benefit of women, not disparaging to them.**

What follows is a longer, more polished version of the email that I sent to her. I hope it will be helpful to any women who are struggling with the same issues, and any men who want to understand this better.

If you would like to see the evidence that the Bible is addressed to men, (*for both men and women, but to men*) please see the relevant part of this article: [The Biggest Mistakes Most People Make When Studying the Bible](#)

I also hope it will help clarify Biblical gender roles a little, though for the sake of space I won't make a full biblical argument for underlying assumption of authority in marriage (*for that see Ephesians 5, et al*).

Biblically, a wife should be the “Executive Officer” of the household

A little context first.

The Greek word that's usually translated “submit” in the various “wives submit to husbands” passage is “????????” ([hupotassó](#)), and the origin of the word is fascinating:

A Greek **military** term meaning “**to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader**”.

(Source: *The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon*)

Since it's a military term, we'll look to the military to see what this submission should look like in practice. (*And I think most women will like this.*)

Considering the troop reference in the definition, the obvious comparison is with an army. However, that breaks down quickly. A more natural comparison is actually with a modern military naval ship.

Consider an analogy in which the ship is the household, the husband/father is the captain, and the children are the crew. **That would make the wife the Executive Officer.** (“XO” for short.)

Now, you might ask: “What is an Executive Officer?”

Answer: the most crucial job on the ship.

An executive officer is generally a person responsible for running an organization, although the exact nature of the role varies depending on the organization. In many militaries and police forces, **an executive officer, or “XO”, is the second-in-command, reporting to the commanding officer. The XO is typically responsible for the management of day-to-day activities**, freeing the commander to concentrate on strategy and planning the unit’s next move.

The Bible supports this type of arrangement quite clearly:

1 Timothy 5:14

14 Therefore, I strongly desire younger *women* to marry, to bear children, **to manage their household**, and to give the one who opposes *us* no opportunity for slander on *their* account.

The Greek word translated “to manage their household” means exactly that, which is virtually identical to the role an XO fulfills on a naval vessel. A naval vessel and its the crew/equipment essentially exists for one purpose: to carry out the will of the captain. Of the crew, the most important person for this task **by far** is the Executive Officer.

The Executive Officer’s responsibilities break down into two basic categories.

The two major jobs Executive Officers have are deputy commander and chief of staff. At levels above battalion, there may be a slot that is Deputy Commander.

As deputy commander, **the XO constantly stays synchronized with the commander.** This can be one of the most important aspects of the job. **The XO should be asking “why” regarding most decisions the commander makes, both so that he can make the same decision for the commander if needed and so that he can learn how a commander makes decisions.** The XO can take command when the commander is somewhere else and he is also the personal representative of the commander wherever the XO goes. **Assuming the relationship between commander and XO is good, the XO will usually be obeyed as if the commander gave an order or made a decision.**

As chief of staff, **the XO is in charge of translating the commanders requirements to his staff, anticipating the commanders requirements, and synchronizing the staff and applying priorities.** Especially in combat circumstances, the staff exists to support the commander in his decision-making. Otherwise the staff keeps the engine of the unit running, so the commander doesn’t need to deliberately worry about it.

Notice that the XO should always be asking “why” to better understand her husband’s decisions, so she can make similar ones. This is important, as they are supposed to work as a team.

Here’s a fuller list of an Executive Officer’s (XO’s) duties.

As the next ranking line officer aboard ship, the executive officer serves as the **aide** or “executive” to the commanding officer. As such, the XO is the direct representative of the commanding officer in maintaining the general efficiency of the ship. With the assistance of the heads of departments, the XO arranges and coordinates all ship’s work, drills, exercises, personnel organization, and the policing and inspection of the ship.

The XO investigates matters affecting the discipline and conduct of the crew and **makes recommendations** concerning these matters to the commanding officer. The XO usually approves or disapproves liberty lists and leave requests. If the XO is unable to carry out the duties of the office, the next senior line officer assigned to the ship normally assumes the duties.

When the crew reports that the ship is cleared for action, the XO inspects it and receives readiness reports from the various department heads. **After confirming the ship’s readiness, the XO then reports to the commanding officer that the ship is ready for action.**

If the captain is disabled, the immediate superior in command of the ship (squadron or group commander) designates **the XO as the acting CO** until a permanent commanding officer can be assigned. For this reason, the XO’s battle station, determined by the captain, is located some distance from the captain’s—a safety measure to prevent disablement of both officers at the sometime. **After each battle, the executive officer makes a detailed report to the commanding officer.**

([Source.](#))

A few things to note:

- First, notice that the XO serves as an “aide” (or “help”) to the captain. Why were women created?
- The person who actually runs the ship day-to-day is the XO.
- Virtually every single important task on the **entire ship** goes through the Executive Officer.
- The XO is in command when the captain is absent
 - In that capacity, the XO is required to constantly ask “why” so she understands why the captain makes decisions so she can make similar decision when she is in command.
- **The XO is responsible for making recommendations to the captain about the ship.**
- The Executive Officer is responsible for making sure the ship is ready for action before setting sail
- The XO is responsible for ensuring that the ship remains ready for action while under way.

Consider the last two points for a moment. By definition, military naval vessels exist for combat. Aship's combat readiness is inspected, confirmed, and maintained by the Executive Officer. **That means literally the entire crew – including the captain – put their lives in the hands of the XO's ability to perform her job well.**

That's a lot of responsibility.

A awful lot.

Wives have a similar level of responsibility in the husband's household, which is a lot of responsibility. And yet, they are still under the authority of the captain. Their mandate is still to carry out his will, to help him, and to support his decisions. They are absolutely crucial to this task too.

That's part of the reason why the US Navy manual says this about the relationships between the Captain and XO:

The commanding officer shall keep the executive officer informed of the commanding officer's policies, and normally shall issue all orders relative to the duties of the command through the executive officer. Normally, the commanding officer shall require that all communications of an official nature from subordinates to the commanding officer be transmitted through the executive officer.

Again, one of a wife's primary duties is to get to know her captain and why he makes decisions. This is so she can make similar decisions, and also because it fosters an excellent working relationship. There's a parallel here with the bride of Christ (*the church*) being told to have the mind of Christ. Likewise, wives should know the mind of their husband. **This will also enable a wife to offer better counsel on command decisions if she know how her husband prefers to make decisions.**

An excellent explanation of the XO's role

One of the best examples of how to be a good Executive officer actually comes to us from the Hollywood of yesteryear. (*They used to get things right... *sigh**) Specifically, the TV series Star Trek: The Next Generation, in the Episode "Gambit, Part 2". In the scene below, Data has assumed command of the Enterprise and Lieutenant Worf has assumed the role of XO because Captain Picard and Commander Riker (*the XO*) are both off the ship.

(Note: **the Executive Officer is sometimes referred to the "First Officer", as in the scene below.**)

The video is ~2.5 minutes long, and well worth the time.

This scene is brilliant for a number of reasons.

First:

There was a discussion about what should be done with the XO (and senior crew) before the decision was made

. A good captain seriously considers the advice of his crew, especially his XO, as a good husband should. Worf says that it's his duty to provide suggestions; Data affirms this and so does the Bible. Proverbs 31 says that a good wife "*opens her mouth in wisdom*", and "*the heart of her husband trusts in her*".

A good wife – like a good Executive Officer – will respectfully offer her “captain” counsel when a decision needs to be made.

That's literally one of her jobs; something she's nearly required to do. She's required to do it respectfully, but it's still something she should do. Personally, I've learned not to ignore my wife's opinions. She's not always right, but I always hear her out because she often has good things to say.

Second:

Notice that the captain (*Data*) makes the decision (*based on the advice he's given*), **but he didn't give the orders to carry the decision out. The XO gave those orders.** The captain merely says “make it so”, and the XO (*Worf*) issues the actual orders to “make it so” (*set course for the system at warp 9*). **That's part of the XO's job: to carry out the will of the captain.** If they work as a proper team, the wife offers counsel, the husband decides, and then the wife carries out the will of her husband. (*just like the church – the bride of Christ – is supposed to carry out His will.*)

This is important to reinforce the wife's authority.

To re-quote from the US Navy manual:

The commanding officer shall keep the executive officer informed of the commanding officer's policies, and **normally shall issue all orders relative to the duties of the command through the executive officer.** Normally, the commanding officer shall require that **all communications of an official nature from subordinates to the commanding officer be transmitted through the executive officer.**

That is, if a member of the crew wants to contact the captain on matters relating to ship business, he goes to the first officer, **not** the captain. The reverse is also true; that is, the captain's orders to the crew are usually transmitted through the XO. Why? **If the captain issues all his orders directly, then the XO is cut out completely despite her crucial role.** That's why everyone gives input, the captain decides, **and then the XO – NOT the captain – issues orders.**

Remember that the XO is responsible for the day-to-day running of the entire ship. Frankly, she needs to know what going on with both the crew and the captain in order to do that job properly. That's why she's the contact point. Official requests from the crew flow up through her to the captain, and orders from the captain flow down through her to the crew. (*The captain can obviously issue orders directly, but he chooses to issue them through the first officer to reinforce her authority.*)

That's important.

That's important because it reinforces both the wife's authority and the husband's authority. The

husband has the ultimate authority, but the wife has plenty also. The Bible commands children to obey their parents – **plural** – not just their father. This setup (*wife advises, husband decides, wife carries out the decision*) keeps the Biblical model of authority intact while also reinforcing the wife's authority.

(On a family level, a "family meeting" would be an equivalent. Get the whole family together, hear their opinions on any major decisions, let your wife's opinion carry weight, and then make a decision. Afterward, a good wife will be perfectly capable of putting that decision into effect as it concerns the household.)

I should also add that this concerns "all communications **of an official nature**", not more relational things. A father shouldn't have a relationship with his kids only through his wife, just as a wife shouldn't only have a relationship with God through her husband. The relational aspect sits separately from official business and is direct.

Third

Notice how the responsibilities of the Executive Officer are **different** from the rest of the crew **after** a decision has been made. Worf felt free to disagree with Captain Picard publicly as the Chief of Security, but that role changes while he functions as the XO. The captain and XO need to work as a team, and **thus any objections the XO has after the captain has made a decision should be raised ; but the objections should be raised privately and not in front of the crew.**

Raising the objections in front of others **after** a decision has been made undermines the captain's authority, which an XO/wife shouldn't do. (*Unless perhaps it's a moral/ethical issue, but even those should be raised privately first.*)

Again, I want to stress that advice and counsel is a **crucial** function of an XO. **If an XO has an objection, she absolutely should raise it.** If she has the objection to an option **before** a decision is made, raising it publicly is perfectly appropriate because one of her roles is offering the captain counsel. But if she has an objection **after** a decision is made, she should raise it in private with the captain. Either way, she **should** respectfully make her objections known. She must abide by her captain's choice (*and with a good attitude*) if he chooses to proceed against her objections, but she **should** respectfully raise them.

That's being a good XO.

Husbands: this partially why you should ask for your wife's counsel **before** making a decision whenever possible. Your initial decision will likely be better (*saving you the embarrassment of having to backtrack/change your mind later*) and you avoid putting her in an uncomfortable position. If you make a snap decision and it has a serious problem that she sees, you put her in the awkward position of needing to either disagree with you publicly or needing to pull you aside to disagree privately.

Don't put her in that position.

Ask for her input **before** you make a decision whenever possible.

Why Masculine Language In the Bible?

Now that we have the context, we'll tackle the issue at hand: Why does God Primarily address the Bible to men instead of addressing both men and women? **I'd argue the answer has to do with the proper "chain-of-command".**

Remember that even though the captain has all the authority and ultimately makes the decision, **it's the XO that carries that decision out.** **This is done to reinforce the authority of the XO.** If the captain issued his orders directly to the crew, the XO's authority would be undermined. The crew might lose respect for her, and/or start ignoring her commands, and/or bypass her and go straight to the captain.

I'd argue that it's the same with the Bible.

In a military, the Fleet Admiral (God) is in charge of multiple ships (*households*). In order to direct each ship in the fleet where He wants it to go, He issues orders to each ship's **captain**. **The Admiral doesn't issue order to a ship's XO, or that would undermine the captain's authority.** Imagine if the Admiral of a fleet ignored the captain and issued orders directly to the XO. The crew would almost instantly lose all respect for – and confidence in – their captain.

Thus:

- A captain issues orders through the XO because issuing orders directly to the crew would undermine the XO's authority.
- **Likewise, God addresses the Bible primarily to men because addressing it to wives would undermine the husband's authority.**

Make sense?

Now, just because the orders aren't issued to the XO doesn't mean that the orders are also issued for the XO.

In fact, the opposite is true. **The XO absolutely should know the orders.** The orders might not have been written to her, but they were absolutely written for her (*and the whole crew*). Remember how much responsibility she has on the ship, and realize there's no way she can properly carry out her duties without knowing the orders. There's Biblical support for this idea too, the Epistles being a great example of this.

God didn't write the Epistles to us, but He did write them for us.

Likewise, the Bible might not have been (*primarily*) written to women, but it most definitely was written for women.

Another example is Proverbs 31 and the various passages that speak about what a good woman is like. While those passages are often not addressed to women, they are very clearly intended for women. A woman should read the Bible just like an XO reads orders addressed to the captain. (*except for the places where women are directly addressed.*)

) They absolutely are applicable to her in most places, and knowing them makes it far more likely that she'll be pleasing to the Admiral (God).

Conclusion

God has a very specific role for wives in a household, and it's a very important role. Understanding the Admiral > captain > XO > crew dynamic makes a lot of sense when applied to the God > husband > wife > kids dynamic. (*Something 1 Corinthians 11:3 teaches quite clearly, except the children part which is found elsewhere*).

Just as the captain relays order to the crew through the XO to reinforce the XO's authority, so also God relays "orders" (*the Bible*) to women and the crew through the captain to reinforce the captain's authority.

I think that's why the Bible is primarily addressed to men: to keep the chain-of-command intact.

That said, there are parts of the Bible that were clearly and specifically written to women. (*Much like a military has a code of conduct for each position.*) Further, the rest of the Bible was written for women, even if it wasn't written to women. Wives absolutely should study and know the 'orders' from the Admiral.

Lastly, don't forget that orders aren't the same as relationships. Fathers and children should have direct relationships that include – but aren't running through – the wife. Likewise, wives should have direct relationships with God that include – but aren't running through – the husband. (*And of course, the children should also have a relationship with God that includes – but doesn't necessarily run through – their parents.*)

I hope that clears things up. ?