

BIBLICAL MARRIAGE SESSION 2: *THE GODLY HUSBAND*

Introduction

A. Just because two professing Christians are married does not mean that they have a Christian marriage. We define how Christian our home is by how closely it conforms to biblical standards. It is not the label on the outside of the package, but the contents on the inside of the package that matters most.

B. As the husband goes, so the family goes. The exercise of godly leadership will be largely determinative of the character of the home (cf., civil rulers, employers, elders). If the husband contributes to the character of the home, the wife often determines the atmosphere of the home.

C. A word to wives (1 Pet. 3:1ff). I am not providing you with a stick for beating your husbands. And remember that next week the tables will be turned.

I. The Husband's Position: Headship.

A. The husband is the "head" of the wife.

1. This headship is a reflection of Christ's relationship to His Bride, the Church (Eph. 5:23; Rev. 21:2). This same motif has a precedent in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah, Ezekiel, Song of Solomon, Hosea, Psalms, etc.). The gospel is a marriage proposal.

2. This headship is inescapable. It is a matter of fact (indicative), not a command (imperative) in Ephesians 5:23. Paul does not say, "Husband, go be head of your wife." He says, "Husband, you are head of your wife." Therefore, you are always saying something through your life – either truthfully or erroneously – about the Gospel and the relationship of Christ and the Church.

3. The husband is a representative of God in the home (1 Cor. 11:3). Thus, he should accurately model the character of God to his wife and family.

4. A husband's first relationship is to his "Head", the Lord Jesus Christ. If his relationship with Christ is not flourishing, then the husband's relationship with his wife will suffer.

5. The husband is the overseer, the boss, and the ruler of the home.

6. In contrast to the tenets of evangelical feminism, this position of headship was given to the husband prior to the Fall, not as a result of the Fall (Gen. 2:18, 22, 23; 1 Tim. 2:11ff; 1 Cor. 11:3).

B. Headship is a Divine calling.

1. This is a calling and responsibility of a husband, but he is not more *inherently* deserving of this position than the wife. It is a position assigned by God, which must be upheld. All authority is *derived*.

2. Headship is not a right to abusive control or gross neglect. It is not a right at all, but rather a responsibility. It is the responsibility to love, lead, protect and serve like Christ.

3. A church officer is likewise given a calling and a role to fulfill before God, but he is not *inherently* more deserving of respect and obedience

than those he serves (Heb. 13:17). It is his calling and position that determines such a response.

4. The difference in our perspective will be manifest when the wife fails to respect the husband's authority. Do we take legitimate offense for Christ and the shame brought to him, or do we take offense (in part or whole) for ourselves? A response of, "How dare you!" can be motivated by self-centeredness or having our pride wounded. Is venting our anger an expression of insecurity and an insistence that we deserve better treatment, or is the disturbance in our spirit driven by zeal for the glory of Christ, which is being undermined by the wife?

5. We all must learn to abide in the calling that God has given to us (1 Cor. 7:20).

II. The Husband's Pursuit: Love.

A. God's main exhortation to the husband is to love his wife (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33; Col. 3:19).

1. Men tend to be challenge-oriented. It can be tempting to pour everything into successfully securing a wife, then after marriage to re-direct our interests and energies into the next challenge.

2. We are to have abiding love. Men can be independent and not relationship oriented. They easily busy themselves with goals and do not feel the "need" for close relationships. But if they are to reflect Christ and the Church, then they must pursue constant union and communion (Jn. 15:1ff).

3. Love is giving (Eph. 5:25), sacrificing one's own body (v. 28), and caring for another as oneself (v. 33). This is a call to perpetual pursuit. The husband should no sooner neglect his wife than his own body. He does not give to his body sporadically or hate his own flesh. This is a call to daily self-denial (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

4. Do not be bitter toward your wife (Col. 3:19). This is a pointed temptation aimed at undermining love. Why does Paul say be not bitter? Christ never complains to the Father, "The woman Thou gavest me", nor does he wish he were with someone else. Christ's love is manifest in repeatedly forgiving his people (Ps. 131)

B. The husband is to love his wife *even as* Christ loves the Church (Eph. 5:25). How does this look? We have to first understand Christ's love.

1. He "set his love" on us (Deut. 7:7; Ps. 91:14). This is a commitment to choose to love, not just "falling in love."

2. He is the supreme model of loving the unlovable (Rom. 5:8; Ps. 40:1ff).

3. As Christ cherishes his Bride (Zeph. 3:17), so the husband his wife. This entails devoting time and our full attention to her (cf., Ps. 40:1; the Psalms are full of this language).

4. Christ's love makes us beautiful (Eph. 5:26-28). Our love produces loveliness in our wives. We are to draw out loveliness and cultivate greater beauty in her.

5. The husband is to praise his bride (Prov. 31:28; Ps. 45).

6. He is to support her. Will he as the stronger vessel dump stuff on the weaker vessel (1 Pet. 3:7)? It is often the opposite of the nature of men to be tender and compassionate, and yet Christ is our ultimate example. He looked upon the multitudes with compassion (without irritation and condescension) nine times in the Gospels. Notice that Paul says to fathers “*provoke not . . . but bring them up in the nurture . . .*” (Eph. 6:4).

7. Christ is never at blame for anything. Yet unlike Adam, he does not take up an accusatory posture toward his Bride.

C. Loving your wife involves being a life-time student of her (1 Pet. 3:7).

1. Husbands need to grow in understanding both our wife’s verbal and non-verbal communication.

2. Watch and listen closely, but do NOT assume. If in doubt, ask. It takes skill to draw things out of our wives that they do not even see in themselves.

3. Areas to explore and discuss with your wife in order to better understand her: bible doctrine, the home, children, her responsibilities, her family, her friends, her areas of Christian service, her goals, her hopes, her dreams, ways you can be a better father and husband, what you do that is not edifying to her, her struggles, her feelings, etc. etc. Even if you limit yourself to this brief list, you will be guaranteed hours of fascinating discussion . . . hopefully.

III. The Husband’s Role: Leadership.

A. Obstacles to Leadership.

1. Fear and insecurity. Leadership is vulnerable and can also foster a fear of failure. Courage is not the absence of fear. It is doing our duty despite our fears. The remedy for fear is love (2 Tim. 1:7; 1 Jn. 4:18). Wives can assist here by enabling the heart of their husbands to safely trust in them (Prov. 31:11, 12).

2. Laziness (Prov. 21:25-26; 10:4-5). Busyness is not the same as diligence. Are you motivated by what is right or what is fun (principle v. pleasure)? Laziness has no follow through (Prov. 12:27). It is full of excuses (Prov. 22:13). Being a leader is hard work (Prov. 6:6-11).

3. Selfishness and pride. Christ’s leadership is seen in his initiative to save his Bride. We are to use our strength and resources to provide physically and spiritually for those entrusted to our care. Our leadership position is not for ourselves. It is for those being led by us.

4. Discouragement (Gal. 6:9).

B. Chief Servant. Christ serves his Bride (Jn. 13:4ff).

1. Authority is given by God as a position of protection and servanthood.
 - a. For example: the civil magistrate is to be the servant, not the savior of the citizenship (Rom. 13:1-7).
 - b. The elders of the Church are to serve the members of the congregation, not lord over the people (1 Pet. 5:1ff; Heb. 13:17).
 - c. So, the husband is to serve his wife and family (Eph. 5:25, 28).

- d. The difference between biblical authority and “authoritarianism” is that authoritarianism is:
 - i. self-serving, rather than focused on those under it (Mt. 20:25-28; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3).
 - ii. it reaches beyond the parameters prescribed for it in the Scriptures, taking responsibilities that God never gave to it.
 - e. The husband is himself a man under authority – God’s authority (1 Cor. 11:3).
2. The husband is the “manager” of his home. Leadership means that the “buck” stops with him. It used to be common to ask, “Is the man of the house at home?” Notice God’s words in the garden (Gen. 3:9).
- a. With rule comes responsibility. Any activity that takes place in his home is ultimately his responsibility (Josh 24:14-15).
 - b. All final decisions are ultimately his responsibility.
- C. Spiritual Shepherds.
1. The husband is to “shepherd” his wife.
 - a. He is to be a teacher and spiritual mentor of his wife (1 Cor. 14:34-35). The husband himself must be a diligent student of God’s Word in order to instruct his wife (2 Tim. 2:15). This only comes with time and effort (less time on our hobbies and more time reading theology).
 - b. He is obligated to “know” his wife intimately, including her spiritual struggles, “besetting” sins, development in Christian maturity and other weaknesses (1 Pet. 3:7). This means being proactive and taking the initiative to discover these things. What are her strongest graces? What sins plague her most? What areas of spiritual growth is she addressing at present? Are you ensuring that she has adequate time for communion with Christ (Lk. 10:38-42)?
 - c. The husband is to wash his wife with the water of the Word (Eph. 5:26). You can even memorize Scripture together.
 - d. The husband is to cherish his wife by protecting her from a multitude of dangers: erroneous theology, bad friends, assuming the wrong (or too many) responsibilities, unedifying habits, dangerous places, pressures from extended family, etc.
 - e. He is ultimately responsible for her obedient living as a wife as well. (Josh 24:14-15).
 - f. You can catechize your wife and children, using the *Shorter Catechism*. This is a time-tested means of helping your wife and children learn discernment by mastering biblical doctrine. It will also protect them from being fooled by bad doctrine (Heb. 5:12-14).
 - g. Shepherding your wife and family at home is a pre-requisite for shepherding the Lord’s people at Church (1 Tim. 3:4, 5).
 2. Family worship is non-optional for a Christian home.
 - a. The father is responsible to *diligently* instruct his family in the ways of the Lord (Deut. 6:6ff).

- b. Since priorities are what you do, anchor family worship to something in your schedule that is unchangeable (i.e., early morning, breakfast, dinner, before bed, etc.). This should begin on the wedding night – not when children come along.
- c. Practical suggestions for leading family worship:
- Read a passage of Scripture. (It is good to have a system for reading through the Bible.) Reading the Bible together everyday with your wife and family is where they will learn to master the content of the Scriptures.
 - Make brief comments on the passage, explaining what it means.
 - Look for applications of the passage to your self, wife and geared to the children as well.
 - Pray at the beginning and at the end. During one of the prayers list specific needs of the family and those you know. It will strengthen the children's faith to see God answering prayer.
 - Sing Psalm selections that will help the children become more familiar with the ones they will hear in church. You can also learn new ones as a family. These can then be sung from memory in the car on the way to church or on trips.
 - Adapt the way you conduct family worship to the needs of the family and the stages of the children.
3. The husband's constant example and speech are also training his wife and family either positively or negatively (by omission or commission). The classroom is all day long (Deut. 6:6ff), not just during family worship. Your actions will often speak louder than your words.
4. Christian education is non-optional for a Christian home (Deut. 6:6ff; 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Col. 2:8).

Conclusion

- A. "You don't know my wife!!!"
- B. You don't know my own struggles. When we are brought to see afresh our own bankruptcy and sin it should humble us in repentance and send us running again to Christ. In going to Christ we are quieted by his love for us, his Bride. This in itself further strengthens us in grace and enables us to love our own wives in mercy.
- C. The glory of Christ and the gospel in our homes.