

## The Christian Home (15): Husbandry Duties (part 5)

Last week we learned that a leader leads by example and manages his authority, this brings us this week to, a leader instructs, corrects, and assumes responsibility.

### I. Husbandry Leadership

1. *A leader instructs.* As husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph.5:25), Edward Hartman concluded, "the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church – as a prophet, priest, and king."<sup>1</sup> This means, among other things, he must instruct and correct her (as a prophet), pray for and with her (as a priest), and protect and provide for her (as a king). With respect to the role of prophet he said, "From a proactive perspective this means the husband is to diligently and faithfully instruct his family in the knowledge of and desire for truth. He must consistently set the standard, not only in practice, but also by the spoken word."<sup>2</sup> Husbands must instruct their wives in temporal and eternal matters. "Husbands ought to direct their wives in things earthly and secular; because they are co-partners in all earthly things: they ought also to instruct them in divine and heavenly things; because they are co-heirs of heavenly blessings, heirs together of the grace of life, as Peter says, 1Pet.3:7" (Davenant).<sup>3</sup>

(1) He must instruct her on her specific roles and responsibility as a wife. William Gouge provided 4 rules to be observed by husbands in instructing their wives:<sup>4</sup> first, "consider the understanding and capacity of your wife, and suit your instructions to her ability." That is, don't over burden her with too many instructions and responsibilities at once. "A little at once, given often (perhaps every day), may in time help her to grasp the totality of what you are trying to teach her"; second, "instruct her in private between yourself and her, that her ignorance may not be put on public display"; third, instruct the rest of the family when she is present; this way she is aware of her expectations as well as every member of the house; fourth, together with your precepts mix sweet and forceful persuasions, which are testimonies of great love."

(2) He must instruct her on the basic and general truths of the Christian faith. "Love to the wife's soul is the very soul of the husband's love; without this all his love is dead and unsavory" (Swinnock).<sup>5</sup> "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut.6:6-7). "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church" (1Cor.14:34-35).

There are husbands that will give their wives a sermon willingly when they are dead, who never cared that they should hear any sermons, or gave them the least heavenly and serious instruction, while they were living; but, alas! It is a sign they never had any true love to them. Such men's wives have more cause than Samson's to weep on the very day of their wedding.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Hartman, *Homeward Bound*, 50

<sup>2</sup> Edward Hartman, *Homeward Bound*, 50

<sup>3</sup> John Davenant, *Colossians*, 2:162

<sup>4</sup> William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 2:207-208

<sup>5</sup> George Swinnock, *Works*, 1:492

<sup>6</sup> George Swinnock, *Works*, 1:493-494

Sam Waldron, in his book, *A Man as Priest in His Home*, suggested five helps for husbands to teach their home (I've reduced them into four).<sup>7</sup> First, they must know the Scriptures. "Obtaining a knowledge of the Bible requires the two major means God has appointed for spiritual learning: personal Bible study and sitting under the public ministry of the Word." With respect to the first he said, "If we would instruct our families, we must heed the command of Scripture to engage in consistent personal Bible study. If we are too busy to spend at least a few minutes a day with the Word of God, we are simply too busy. We must take whatever radical steps are necessary to find time to read and study the Word of God on a daily basis." He then clarified, "But the personal study of the Bible was never intended to be an adequate source of instruction by itself. We must also set ourselves under a solid public ministry of the Word of God." "The husband is to excel the wife in knowledge, and be her teacher in the matters that belong to her salvation. He must instruct her in the word of God, and instruct her in particular duties, and help her to subdue her own corruptions, and labor to confirm her against temptations" (Baxter).<sup>8</sup>

Second, they must develop the grace of being spiritually-minded. By this he means, "we must also teach our families in the natural moments that mark the overflow of a spiritual mind. Such moments are interwoven through all of life, and practicing spiritual-mindedness will help us to bring the Word of God into every situation." This practically means, husbands must keep their hearts in a spiritually healthy condition. "You shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul...and you shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut.11:18-19). Only a healthy heart, will be willing and able to teach others.

Third, they must speak to their wives. Husbands must be intentional in instructing their wives and homes. "It may work to set up specific times to talk and pray with our wives and individual children regarding spiritual things." Husbands can/should read the Bible with their wives, memorize Scripture, and read good books. "The husband must be the principle teacher of the family. He must instruct them, and examine them, and rule them about the matters of God, and see that the Lord' Day and worship be observed by all that are within his gates" (Baxter).<sup>9</sup>

Fourth, they must support the instruction their wives (home) receive through the church they attend. Husbands must ensure their wives (and children) are understanding and profiting from the instruction received at church. "The teaching and preaching of pastors in the local church is an extension of the husband's own priestly instruction in the home." This means, husbands must first ensure they understand what's being taught in the church and are able/willing to answer questions and clarify any confusion. "And if they want to learn something (i.e., taught at church), let them ask their own husbands at home" (1Cor.14:35).

Before we leave the husband's duty to instruct his wife, the need for patience and prayer must be underscored. (a) Patience. Husbands must instruct their wives (home) with patience. This means, they must not grow frustrated if they ask basic or repeated questions. "The husband must be strongest in family patience; bearing with the weaknesses of the wife" (Baxter).<sup>10</sup> "Husbands, dwell with your wives with knowledge" (1Pet.3:7). Instruction must be "precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isa.28:10). Instruction is often repetitious. It covers the same ground over and again. It's better to teach less, if it be understood and retained, then to teach more, and it go into one ear and out the other.

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<sup>7</sup> Sam Waldron, *A Man as Priest in His Home*, 69-72

<sup>8</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 439

<sup>9</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 439

<sup>10</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 439

How cruel is a husband who harshly and roughly instructs his wife, as if to violently thrust into her head deep mysteries which she, for various reasons, may not yet be able to understand, and then become so angry with her for her lack of comprehension that he proclaims her ignorance before the children, friends, and strangers. This harshness is ordinarily so fruitless, and additionally so exasperates a woman's spirit, as I think he would be better off to completely omit the duty than do it after such a manner.<sup>11</sup>

(b) Prayer. Husbands must pray for and with their wives. This can be illustrated by elders, who must give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4) "The husband is to be the mouth of the family, in their daily conjunct prayers unto God. Therefore he must be able to pray, and also have a praying heart. He must be as it were the priest of the household" (Baxter).<sup>12</sup> As only God can truly instruct our wives (home), we must daily ask that He would bless His word as it's read and taught within our home.

A husband and wife have the incredible privilege of uniting their hearts and minds in a unique and powerful way as they daily enter God's presence together in prayer. By this means, our gracious God offers to redeemed couples a spiritual intimacy that nothing else in this life even begins to approach. And yet how few husbands and wives have discovered this treasure! If our Father in heaven graciously offers us this intimacy with himself and with each other, then it is clearly the godly husband's duty to take the initiative in faithfully leading his wife and family to the throne room of God's presence.<sup>13</sup>

2. *A leader corrects.* Edward Harman pointed out that a prophet must not only instruct but correct. "There is also a corrective perspective, for as a prophet the husband must patiently and gently reprove his wife and family when they stray."<sup>14</sup> He finds proof for this assertion in Ezekiel 3:18, "When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood." "The authority and responsibility which God has given to a husband over his wife require that when good and right reason presents itself, he should reprove her. Upon this ground, it is noted of many good husbands who were undeniably loving, kind, meek, and gentle husbands, that they reprov'd their wives, as Jacob (Gen.30:2), Job (Job 2:10), David (2Sam.6:21-22), and others" (Gouge).<sup>15</sup>

Both William Gouge<sup>16</sup> and Joel Beeke<sup>17</sup> gave guidelines for husbands when correcting their wives (as they overlap, we will combine them into four). First, correction must be necessary. "The whole purpose of correction is to help the offender see and reform her offense. He may indeed reprove where God has been dishonored, but he has no authority to reprove where no wrong has been done (Beeke)." "Christ, in giving direction for reproofing correctly, lays down this principle, 'Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault' (Matt.18:15). A trespass therefore must go before reproof. Where no trespass is, there reproof is unjust" (Gouge). According to Gouge, not only must there be an actual offense, but a substantial offense. "Fairness requires that the matter for which a husband reproves his wife be important, namely for some fault that is dangerous to her soul, hurtful to their estate, and contagious by reason of bad example to children and others in the family." He then gave three reasons reproofs must be rare: "When reproofs are seldom used except for urgent and necessary

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<sup>11</sup> William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 2:208

<sup>12</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 439

<sup>13</sup> Edward Hartman, *Homeward Bound*, 57

<sup>14</sup> Edward Hartman, *Homeward Bound*, 51

<sup>15</sup> William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 2:215

<sup>16</sup> William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 2:215-224

<sup>17</sup> Joel Beeke, *Living in a Godly Marriage*, 212-221

reasons, it shows that a husband takes no delight in rebuking his wife, but is even forced to, makes his wife regard it much more, and is likely to work a more perfect cure, for seldom and rare reproofs commonly pierce most deeply."

Continual scolding and finding fault with a wife for everything wrong is harmful. If not only the wife herself, but a child, or any else in the house do wrong, the wife shall be blamed for it. This is too common a fault in husbands, by which they much provoke their wives and many times make them regard a reproof no more than any other word. For as birds which always abide in bell towers where there is much ringing are not a bit frightened with their loud sound, so wives are not moved at all who have their ears from time to time filled with their husband's rebuke.<sup>18</sup>

Second, correction must be proportionate. "Just as the bandage must be fitted to the wound and the medicine measured by the sickness, so his reproof and correction must be fitted to the sin committed" (Beeke). Beeke then said, "A sin of ignorance is not to be reproved as if it were a sin of blatant rebellion. A sin of weakness is not to be reproved as if it were a sin of resistance—in some cases, a sin may even need to be passed over in silence. Neither is a sin of arrogant rebellion to be ignored as if it were an excusable weakness."

Third, correction must be private. "When the husband feels that he must reprove his wife and urge her to return to the ways of truth and righteousness, he must wisely and carefully choose a *fit time* and a *fit place*" (Beeke). Beeke continued, "A husband must carefully and prayerfully seek out a seasonable time and seasonable place for reproof lest his efforts to heal the wound serve only to aggravate it. It must be a time when he is ready to reprove (without passion) and when she is ready to be reproved (in private)." "When correcting, the husband should be calm and free from anger, grief, or any other such emotion which might cloud either his thinking or his speaking, and he must choose a time when his wife is capable of receiving reproof, when she herself is also calm and free from anger, grief, and the like" (Beeke).

Fourth, correction must be gentle. "Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it" (Ps.141:5). "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Gal.6:1). "A *soft tongue*, as Solomon notes, *breaks the bone*, that is softens a hard heart, and beats down a stubborn pride (Prov.25:15)" (Gouge).

3. *A leader assumes responsibility.* Leaders assume responsibility and refuse to make accuses or blame others. "And He said, 'Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?' Then the man said, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate'" (Gen.3:12).

As a Christian, the husband is responsible to God to head up his family. He is the head of his home. Headship means leadership. It does not mean merely privilege and right. It does not mean merely authority to exercise. It does not mean merely wearing the uniform and having the right to give the final word. It means all of those things, but it means also assuming the responsibilities that go with such authority. Husbands must live up to the responsibility of leadership that corresponds to the position of headship. They must truly *lead* the home.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> William Gouge, *Building a Godly Home*, 2:220

<sup>19</sup> Jay Adams, *Christian Living in the Home*, 90