

The Role of Men in the Family

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The man's role within a family unit has changed over the past century due to a number of factors. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, it was primarily the responsibility of the man to work and provide for his family. Following the First and Second World Wars, the number of women in the workplace steadily increased and the position of household provider was no longer the exclusive domain of men. As more and more women were able to work outside the home and provide for themselves, this independence made it easier for married couples to divorce rather than work through issues. This is one of the factors contributing to an escalation in the divorce rate during the latter part of the 20th century. As abuse and violence towards women has also increased, and with few alternatives, in some cases divorce was the best option. As more and more couples divorced, it eventually became a socially acceptable practice.

Unfortunately, this trend created serious problems for the children of divorced parents. It placed stress on the extended family members (including uncles, aunts, grandparents) of these children. Close friends of divorced couples were also adversely affected. When all these factors are taken into consideration, it can be seen that communities suffered as well. When many communities are experiencing these upheavals, it becomes a national dilemma. A result of this trend in the opening decade of the 21st century is that only 63% of American children grow up with both their biological parents (from "The State of our Union – 2005", a report by the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University). It is hard to define with any accuracy exactly where a nation will end up if they continue on this course. However, Almighty God knows the end result will be extremely damaging to any society and warns mankind to make the necessary changes before it is too late,

Behold, I (Almighty God) will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with utter destruction (Mal. 4:5-6; NKJV throughout unless noted; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

The responsibility for making the necessary changes within the family unit falls on the man as God gave that responsibility to him. A married man has the primary responsibility to care for, and teach, his wife and children,

For He (Almighty God) established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, (so) that they should make them known to their children; (so) that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments (Ps. 77:5-7; Ed. notes in parentheses).

And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as (if) to the (office of the) Lord (Christ). For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and he (Christ) is the savior of the body (Eph. 5:22-23; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25).

And if they (women) want to learn something (spiritually speaking), let them ask their own husbands at home... (1Cor. 14:35a; Ed. notes in parentheses).

By taking all of these scriptures into account, it can be seen that a man has the role of leadership, for the betterment of his family, just as Christ took on that responsibility for the church. As Christ is described as the last Adam (1Cor. 15:45, 47), it means that the first Adam had the same responsibilities regarding his wife, Eve, but failed to fulfill them. Adam was given clear instructions through which he could lead and care for his wife, but decided to abdicate his responsibility. His abdication resulted in the death of his wife. It appears that he also failed to properly instruct his son, Cain, who became a murderer.

Therefore, the correct role model for men to follow is none other than Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 5:23, it states the man is “head of the wife,” which means that he has both the authority as well as responsibility for his nuclear family beginning with his wife. Unfortunately, there are many men who exercise their authority without any sense of responsibility or abuse their authority. In many cases, because these men are irresponsible in their duties, their wives are able to justify being “liberated,” which is the first step to independence from the family unit. Sadly, divorce often follows.

Part of being a good leader involves delegating authority in order to accomplish whatever tasks are required within a family. As every family member has different talents and strengths, the man needs to identify those and allow them to be further developed for the benefit of the entire household. This does not mean having a wife do something that is beyond her strength or ability (1Pe. 3:7). The head of the church (Christ) delegates authority so that the whole body of members benefits,

And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of faith and the knowledge of the son of God to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13; cf. 1Cor. 12:12-31).

When a man delegates authority within his family, it is not an abdication of his authority. Instead, proper delegation reinforces the man’s role as head of the household. Adam abdicated his authority when he stood by and allowed his wife

to be exposed to a force that she was not capable of handling (Gen. 3:1). By doing this, he was not showing love and concern for his wife. In society today, there are many ways in which men are abdicating their responsibility within the family, but it is not the purpose of this document to cover them all. However, one fundamental area includes child-rearing where some men seem to think it is entirely up to their wives to deal with every aspect of their children's upbringing from changing diapers to disciplining them. This is not the case because the head of the Household of God (Jesus Christ) understood that he had the responsibility of teaching those who were given to him just as a father does within his own household,

I (Christ) have given them (the disciples) Your (God our Father's) word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world (Jn. 17:14; Ed. notes in parentheses).

When Christ's disciples were acting in an undisciplined manner, Christ dealt with the situation,

And having taken him (Christ) aside, Peter began to reprove him, saying, 'Take up mercy to yourself Lord, this shall not happen to you!' ²³ But he (Christ) turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Mt. 16:22-23; RNT).

My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights (Prov. 3:11-12).

This does not mean that a husband has to do all the teaching and disciplining, but he is responsible overall for how these issues are administered.

The idea, that women are the bread-winners for their family and they are also expected to come home after work and make supper for the family, is not Biblical. Christ, the head of the church, is referred to as the bread of life (Jn. 6:48). Therefore, the husband has the primary responsibility to work and put bread on the table for his family. Even when Christ was very young, he realized that it was his responsibility to work so that he could provide for those who would become his responsibility in the future,

And he (Christ) said to them (his parents), 'Why is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?' (Lk. 2:49; Ed. notes in parentheses)

When a father provides for his family, his example helps instill good work ethics in his children. In addition, he should make sure his children are fulfilling certain tasks around the home during their formative years,

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6).

With a father's good example, combined with proper instruction, young male children should be mature enough by the age of twenty to take on responsibilities

of their own (the age demarcating adulthood biblically, see Ex. 30:14). These can take the form of contributing to the household while completing their education, or starting fulltime work and establishing their own home,

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things (1Cor. 13:11).

Young men should be taught that hard work is not something that should be avoided or regarded as menial. Jesus Christ performed hard physical labor in his job as a homebuilder.

Being a homebuilder at that time in the Middle East included masonry work. So Christ would have been doing everything from working with heavy wooden beams to large stones. As Christ's human father preceded him in death (Jn. 19:26), Christ would have taken on the responsibility of providing for his mother, sisters and brothers (Mt. 13:55-56). So any man not willing to work in order to provide for his wife and family is not following the example of Jesus Christ. For anyone claiming to be a follower of Jesus Christ, there is a warning if they neglect to provide for their household,

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1Tm. 5:8).

Unfortunately, due to a poor work ethic as well as other bad habits, some men seem to think they show love to their wives by providing a subsistence living, while others spend a portion of their earnings on their own pleasure when the family budget cannot afford it,

Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no leader, overseer or ruler, provides her bread in the summer, and gathers (saves) her food in the harvest. How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep – So shall your poverty come on you like a robber, and your need like an armed man (Pr. 6:9-11; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

Often it is the husband who complains the most about his wife's performance in her duties who gives her the least assistance. Instead, a husband should be paying very close attention to his wife's needs with the understanding that she will be better able to fulfill her responsibilities if he offers the right assistance,

So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church (Eph. 5:28-29).

A good husband needs to recognize and continue to develop his wife's unique talents while compensating for any weaknesses as Christ does for his church,

I (Paul) can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13).

Relative to her responsibilities within the family, a wife should be able to say the following about her husband, “I can do all the things I need to do, in properly serving my family, through my husband who strengthens me.”

In following Christ’s example of leadership, men need to realize that it is not wrong to be open about their feelings. This could include being moved by a sad situation or even expressing outrage if it was warranted,

Now as he (Christ) drew near, he saw the city (of Jerusalem) and wept over it (because he knew it would be destroyed in the near future) (Lk. 19:41; Ed. notes in parentheses).

And Jesus went into the temple and cast out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the chairs of those who were selling doves. ¹³ And he said to them, “It has been written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you make it a ‘den of thieves’” (Mt. 21:12-13; RNT).

Christ did not conduct himself in a half-hearted manner, and he expects all men to be of the same mind (Phil. 2:5),

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might (Deut. 6:5).

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might... (Ecc. 9:10a).

I (Christ) know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot (for God’s way of life). I could wish that you were cold or hot (one or the other). So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth (Rev. 3:15-16; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Going back to the earlier example of Adam abdicating his responsibility toward his wife, men need to be prepared to be “inconvenienced” sometimes in order to effectively serve their family. This may even include “taking it on the chin” for something a father and husband was not directly responsible for. Also, doing the right thing is not always popular in this society and standing up for important values may result in being ridiculed by friends, work associates and extended family members. Christ stood up for the whole household of God and took a grueling punishment that he didn’t deserve. He didn’t break down and cry about it or verbally attack anyone. Instead, he went through the trial without complaining or seeking any retribution,

He (Christ) was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth (Isa. 53:7; cf. Mt. 26:63; 27:12-14; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

If a family member goes astray in some manner, the father or husband can receive the brunt of any attacks or criticism, even though the fault may not be his. Following Christ’s example, the leader of a household sometimes has to bear this burden,

For what credit is it if, when you are beaten (including emotionally) for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God (1Pe. 2:20; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

In order to follow and obey Almighty God, a man must be prepared to stand alone in some circumstances. However, this is not an excuse for a leader of a household to abandon his responsibilities,

If anyone comes to me and does not hate (love less) his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters (who may disagree with his beliefs), yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (Lk. 14:26; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

This scripture shows that a man has to take whatever action is necessary to worship Almighty God correctly even if it means upsetting his wife, children, or other family members. However, this does not mean he can treat them unfairly in the process,

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband. ¹¹ But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife. ¹² But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. ¹³ And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save *your* husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save *your* wife? (1Cor. 7:10-16).

Men have been placed in a position by God that allows them to either correctly or incorrectly represent Christ, who in turn represents God our Father. It is a high calling and a great responsibility. How well men fulfill their role will determine whether or not God has to clean up the mess that will occur if men abdicate their responsibility toward their wives, children, communities and nation (Mal. 4:5-6).

In most societies today, the role that God created for a man is under attack. In order to counter this trend, men need to study the examples of Christ's leadership and strive to follow his example. In a prophecy from the book of Isaiah, failure is not an option,

As for my people, children are their oppressors (because of poor upbringing and leadership examples), and women rule over them (because most of the men have abdicated their responsibilities). O my people! Those who lead you (including family psychologists, religious leaders [Eze. 34: 1-10], various special interests groups, political organizations, etc.) cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths (Isa. 3:12; Ed. notes in parentheses).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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