

## **Leading in the home - 3 pts.**

This is a challenging topic to teach on. Not because we don't know what is required of Godly men in the home, but precisely because we DO know what is required of us.

We could do a week long conference on just this! But with all we know and all the resources that are available, why do so many families struggle to maintain peace in their homes?

The short answer is that we are often disobedient in the face of abundantly clear and concise scriptural commands. The Bible is not ambiguous on how we ought to lead our families.

As with all ministry, leading IS serving. Leading is being Others centered instead of self-centered. Leading is emptying ourselves of any form of worldly power and willfully volunteering to take the place of a servant.

This truth is hard for people to obey, especially men, because we want to maintain a measure of control in our lives.

We want to be the king of our castle! It's MY home! My house, my rules!

This domineering attitude is violently opposed to Christ's nature, who "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" (Phil 2:7), He declared plainly, "I am among you as the one who serves." (Luke 22:27)

Let's run through some basics - you are perhaps quite familiar with these, but as Paul writes to the Philippian church, "for me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe." (Phil 3:1)

Husbands love your wives. This teaching is repeated in the NT to the Ephesians and Colossians.

This concept is demonstrated many many times throughout the Bible as a whole. But I think it's important to reflect on why such a clear command exists - husbands, love your wives.

You know this - EPH 5:25 - husbands love your wives, as Christ loves the church...

We men say, well IF my wife only honored me, respected me, submitted to me - IF SHE fulfilled her end of the bargain, THEN I would love her.

We make the relationships in our homes transactional and conditional. If you do this for me, then I will do this for you.

Our relationships become an exchange of goods and services.

It is that sentiment that displays our selfishness. Yet, this way of thinking and behaving is generally accepted as normal and justifiable in society.

On the contrary - God's word says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the church.

In that relationship between Christ and the church, and in our individual relationships with Jesus - He is always the initiator - he always has been!

When we were yet enemies with Him his love reached out to us.

He loved us while we scorned his name, while we thought we were too smart for Him. He loved us while we disrespected His name. He loved us when we did not submit to Him or His will. He loved us first!

If the scenario was reversed, and the relationship between Christ and the church reflected our own homes then we would be lost as a church.

If Christ only loved us when we were on our best behavior, and in perfect submission to Him; if His affection and care for the church were contingent on our behavior - we would be lost, cut off a long time ago.

Conversely, what we find is that SINCE Jesus loves the church so much, and gave himself for us - THEN we respond in kind, with love. This ought to be how our homes work.

Practical application #1: husbands, take the servants place and love your wife. Love her first and especially when she doesn't deserve it. Be the initiator!

Much of this message stands on the assumption that we are students of Christ, seeking to be conformed into His image by the power of the Holy Spirit.

If any of us believe that there is a simple three step process to fix our homes - be warned: any attempt to do this in our own strength will be unsustainable.

If you find yourself wondering why this isn't an enduring characteristic in your home - examine yourself and ask...have I truly died to self, have I truly put on Christ.

Christ's love for the church is enduring. Our love for our wives should be enduring.

Now, in our endeavor to be shaped into Christ's likeness, to love our wives as Christ loves the church we must examine what that looks like.

I have heard every manner of sin and rudeness covered up by the glib retort, "I'm just speaking the truth in love." When nothing could be further from the truth.

When our words and actions are gruff or offensive to our loved ones we often use this phrase or perhaps we say...the truth hurts.

Let it not be so. Let us adopt the gentle nature of Christ who “will not quarrel nor cry out...who won’t break a bruised reed, and won’t snuff out a smoking ember.” (ISA 42)

He is the one who “will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.” (ISA 40)

Peter writes that we husbands ought to dwell with our wives with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life...(1 Peter 3:7)

Sometimes when teaching through this passage our focus becomes misplaced somehow, women become offended and say, “I am NOT the weaker vessel.”

Peter’s point here is not to point out that men have greater upper body strength than women. He is exhorting us to honor our wives, not in a condescending or arrogant way as if they are beneath us.

But in a gentle, purposeful way - as if we are caring for a precious treasure.

We should treat them gently as Christ treats us. We should treat them like a revered heirloom or fine china - something beautiful, designed and crafted to be elegant.

Our wives are not cast iron skillet, no matter how they may present themselves.

They are like fine china. If you drop her, if you handle her roughly, spiritually speaking, she will break, she will be damaged.

Practical application #2: Honor your wives, be understanding, treat them gently.

Gentleness is part of Christ's nature so it also found in His disciples. You will recall that when Christ sent out his disciples to preach he instructed them to be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves. (REF Matt 10:16)

This should be an enduring characteristic in our discipleship and a benefit to our families

For those of us who have children - this gentleness, harmlessness, is a biblical imperative that extends to them as well.

We may reject this thought initially, thinking: well I was raised roughly, or I had to learn the hard way, or I never had a Dad - or any number of possible realities that you all have experienced in your childhood.

Me personally...I was raised by a single mother who waited tables until I was 10 years old - when she remarried. She raised myself and my two brothers on a waitresses wages. There was no strong male influence in my

life until I was older - with my step father. Who, God bless him, married a woman with 3 kids!

A lot of my experiences raising young children are completely new to me because there was no Dad around for me to learn these things from.

BUT It doesn't matter how we were raised, what kind of home we came from, what your current marital situation looks like - we must be conformed to the person of Christ as a servant in His household, taking our parenting tips from Him!

I have learned so much about God's heart for us as His children by being a Father.

On two occasions Paul instructs Dads: do not provoke your children either to wrath or discouragement but instead to raise up your children in the training (nurture) and admonition (exhortation) of the Lord. (COL 3:19; EPH 6:4)

Practical application 3: Father's do not provoke your children, walk alongside them, encourage them in Jesus, look to your heavenly Father as your example.

So...you have your 3 points, they are basic - but I want to get very real for a minute because what I've seen in our churches and homes is disturbing.

Lead in the home by serving, not by Lording.

Serve with endurance by being conformed into the image of Christ.

If we haven't yet been conformed, if we haven't yet been fully grasped by the gospel, then we will have a divided heart, and a divided home.

There is no way on earth for us to be able to fulfill even these few simple things apart from Christ.

Here's reality - we can and do fake who we are everywhere else, except our homes.

Our true selves in all of our filth and stink and hard-heartedness are very much on display in our homes.

If our hearts have not been truly conformed to Christ's heart then our truest, grossest selves will be known to those we profess to love the most.

We will be known by them as hypocrites - men with divided hearts.

We will go to our jobs, and we will go to church and we will go to the store

AND, we will go to Social Media - and the man we show in all of those venues, away from our homes - is a fabricated ideal - not authentic, not real.



This public man is the man who works out, who reads his bible, and prays for others, who recycles, and loves babies, and defends the helpless.

We love that man, I wish I was that man all of the time - I'm not.

But the real us, the man with the stinky feet, and the beer belly, and the poor hygiene - that guy stays at home.

The domineering man who expects to be waited on and served, the man who is rude and rough to our families.

The guy who sets his Bible on the coffee table as a prop - who doesn't pray with his family, who doesn't share the word with his spouse or children, who dabbles in XXX, and drunkenness - that is the guy, we are willing to present to our families because, after all they love us just as we are.

As a matter of fact they may have known us before we came to Christ, they don't expect too much of us. In this we find God's love bestowed upon us from our families - a love that we don't deserve, yet by grace is ours anyway.

[2Sa 12:14 NKJV] Nathan to David - 14 "... by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme...."

If we desire so strongly to avoid David's trap and not provide opportunities for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme His holy name - how much more

should we be mindful of our families!? These are God's precious ones, and He has entrusted them to our care.

God forbid that at the end of our lives our wives and children shun God because of our sin.

This has taken its toll on many pastors' families -

The children will say - my Dad had a church life and a home life and the two weren't the same.

OR - those things my Dad or husband professed to believe in public weren't real in our home

OR, he spent so much time loving on others (as we should) while never displaying an ounce of love in our home.

There's a lesson there about stewardship and faithfulness. Our families are not ours, they are God's treasured possession, just as the church is Christ's.

LISTEN: SINCE the Spirit of Christ dwells in us THEN we will be loving Fathers and Husbands in our homes.