

Note: Some of the material in this message was taken from class notes obtained from Clearcreek Chapel's Counseling Training program.

Story of big animals and little animals in a football game (David Jeremiah)...

Successful family living doesn't just happen. It takes preparation. That's why, last week, we began the series, "God's Design for the Family." In our first study, we went back to basics on marriage from Genesis 2. Before continuing, I'd like to recommend a couple of resources to supplement what we're learning. First, I encourage you to pick up the "homework" assignment that goes along with each study. And second, consider doing some additional reading on the subject of the family.

Recommended Reading:

For the unmarried, young person:

Letters to Philip, Charlie Shedd; Letters to Karen, Charlie Shedd

For everyone:

Christian Living in the Home, Jay Adams

You and Your Child, Charles Swindoll

Your Family, God's Way, Wayne Mack

What does God expect of the husband? To answer that question, we're going to do a topical, expository study of two New Testament texts.

Proposition: From our study of 1 Peter 3:7 and Ephesians 5:25-29, we're going to see three expectations God places upon husbands.

I. Be a Learner (1 Peter 3:7).

A. I must know her.

B. I must honor her.

1. Because of her value

2. Because of the spiritual implications

II. Be a Lover (Ephesians 5:25-29).

A. Love her as Christ loved the Church (25-27).

1. Love is giving, not getting.

2. Love is serving, not self-seeking.

B. Love her as you love your own body (28-29).

1. I must notice her needs.

2. I must care for her needs.

III. Be a Leader.

A. What leadership is not...

B. What leadership is...

Next week, we'll consider the role God has designed for the wives, but this week our focus is on the husbands. As I mentioned last week, you need to know what the Bible says about this topic even if you're not a husband. Why? Because you know men that

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are--relatives, people at work and in the church--and the time will come when a husband may drop a bombshell on you, "I'm struggling in my marriage." What will you say to him? We all need to know what God requires of husbands--three key expectations.

I. Be a Learner (1 Peter 3:7).

Peter wrote this counsel to husbands in 1 Pet 3:7, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." Let's put this verse in its context.

To whom did Peter write this letter? According to 1:1, to suffering Christians that he described as "scattered sojourners." It was tough to be a Christian in the Roman Empire in the mid 60's of the 1st century AD. The question that confronted the church was this. How do you live as a Christian in a hostile, non-Christian world? That's the same issue facing us today in our post-Christian nation. Peter tells us in 2:12--We must let the world see Christ in us. How do we do that? The answer is given in 2:21--We must walk in His steps. We must live as Jesus' lived, especially when we are wronged. We must practice submission (which is the key word in ch 2-3). What's the best way for Christians to impact a godless world? Let the world see Christ.

How? Peter identifies three areas. One, in the way we relate to civil authorities (2:13-17). Two, in the way we relate to our bosses on the job (2:18-25). And three, in our family relationships (3:1-7).

That's why 3:7 begins with the phrase, "In like manner." In the same way the world ought to be able to see Christ in us in the civil arena, and on the job, and in Christian wives, in like manner in husbands. Howard Hendricks said it well (Straight Talk, Dobson), "If your Christianity doesn't work at home, it doesn't work. Don't export it!"

Husbands are to follow in Christ's steps in the way they relate to their wives. The key question is this--How would Jesus want me to treat my wife? And the answer, according to 3:7, is this--I must be a Learner. How? As we probe the verse, I discover two practical responsibilities I have as a husband.

A. I must know her.

V 7 states, "Ye husbands, dwell with them (i.e. "your wives") according to knowledge." What does that mean? The NIV translates, "Be considerate as you live with your wives." The word "dwell" literally means "to be in the same house with." Add to that concept, the phrase "according to knowledge," and it boils down to this. "Husbands, know your wives."

Please notice this is a command. The world says women cannot be understood by men--"Just cope with her. You can't understand her." But God says not only CAN I, I MUST. I must study my wife.

Men, how well do you know your wife? Back in the summer of 1992, I heard about a TV newsman in Detroit. When he went on the air one day, he was wearing glasses. He didn't usually wear glasses at work, but the reason he had them on that day was clear. He and his wife were in a motel over the weekend. Somehow he forgot his contac case, and discovered the fact when he was getting ready for bed. He put his contacts in a glass of water, set the glass on the sink counter, and went to bed. During the

night, his wife woke up thirsty, went to the sink, and drank the glass of water which her husband had so thoughtfully prepared for her.

One of the problems married couples face is the longer they're married, the less observant they are of each other. Especially husbands. Yet if I am to know my wife, I must observe her. That takes time. That takes work and study.

If we are to know our wives, men, we must communicate with them. One survey revealed that the average husband and wife spend 37 minutes a WEEK in actual communication! A lot of fellows spend more time communicating with their secretaries than their wives.

Getting to know our wives doesn't just happen. Nor is it easy. But by God's help, it is possible (Wives, you need to keep in mind this is extremely difficult for you man, so encourage him as he tries to improve). We need a game plan. Study your wife. Write down her likes and dislikes, what brings her fear and what brings her delight. If I am to be a Learner, God says I must know my wife.

B. I must honor her.

Notice the participle, "Giving honor unto the wife." Why should I honor my wife? Peter gives us two reasons.

1. Because of her value

"Giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel." I must honor my wife because God has given her value. Notice God's Word calls the wife "the weaker vessel." In Peter's day, women were viewed as objects, as sub-human. But Christianity introduced radical change. Gal 3:28 makes it clear that in Christ's standing, my wife is my equal. But in makeup and function, she is different. Don't forget this fellows--Maybe she can't "outlift" me, but she will probably "outlive" me! Don't expect your wife to act like a man. She's not! And if you complain that your wife isn't feminine enough, let me ask you--Do you treat her like a lady?

The term "vessel" was used of a claypot or a piece of fine pottery. The word "weaker" carries with it the idea of "delicate." The point is that a husband ought to treat his wife like he would a delicate, valued, expensive piece of fine china. Prov 18:22 says this, "Whoso finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord." I must honor my wife because of her value.

2. Because of the spiritual implications

Peter reminds husbands that their wives are "heirs together of the grace of life." Don't miss the implication at the end of v 7. A husband that doesn't know his wife, and doesn't honor his wife, is doing what? It's hindering his prayer life.

This is critical. Your relationship with your spouse affects your relationship with God. If I ignore my wife's needs on Saturday, it short-circuits my singing of "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus" on Sunday! There are severe spiritual implications when we fail to give honor to our wives.

Charlie Shedd shares (as told by David Jeremiah) in one of his books about honesty, and how we should write down what we feel. He said that one time he came home after he and his wife had had a big fight, and there was a note on the counter in the kitchen. The note said, "Dear Charlie, I hate you. Love, Martha."

Men, if your wife leaves a note like that for you, you'd better read it carefully! In fact, make it your aim to study your wife. Be a Learner.

II. Be a Lover (Ephesians 5:25-29).

I hesitate to use the term "lover" because of its misuse in society. So let's turn to Eph 5, and define what we mean by the term. We read in Eph 5:25-29, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." God calls husbands to be lovers to their wives.

In his book, Strike the Original Match, Chuck Swindoll begins chapter two with this personal account (27), "It was on one of those television talk-shows several months ago. The guest was an actor, well-known for his romantic roles on film. Predictably, he was asked, 'What makes a great lover?' I am confident everyone watching the show (myself included) expected the standard macho-playboy response. To the surprise of the host and the audience, his answer must have raised eyebrows all across America. It went something like this:

'A great lover is someone who can satisfy one woman all her life long...and who can be satisfied by one woman all his life long. A great lover is not someone who goes from woman to woman to woman. Any dog can do that.'"

He's right. There's a great need today for men who are real lovers. And we find out what a "real lover" is in Ephesians 5.

Quickly, let's refresh ourselves on the context. The first three chapters of Ephesians deal with doctrine. Upon that foundation, Eph 4-6 deal with duty.

In Eph 5:18, a key command is given, "Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." That command is pivotal to the material that follows. How can you tell if a person is filled with the Spirit? Do they do spectacular things? Do they glow? Actually, the evidences are very tangible. Paul gives three participles that modify what happens when a person is filled with the Spirit--speaking (19), giving thanks (20), and submitting (21). From that word "submit," Paul launches into a whole section dealing with proper relationships (5:22-6:9)--he details what the Spirit-filled life looks like for wives, for husbands, for children, for parents, for slaves, and for masters.

For our consideration, don't miss this. If I am a Spirit-filled Christian, it'll show up in three places--one, in the church (19-20), two, in the home (5:22-6:4), and three, on the job (6:5-9). The opposite is true. If I blow my testimony in the church, or the home, or on the job, it means I'm not filled with the Spirit.

What does a Spirit-filled husband look like? He is a Lover. Which raises an important question. How is a husband to love his wife? Paul gives us two explanations.

A. Love her as Christ loved the Church (25-27).

"Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the Church." Frankly, the American culture doesn't help us very much when it comes to understanding this kind of love. To many people, love is a feeling, or (in the words of a song) love is "never having to say, 'I'm sorry.'" We need to shine the spotlight of the Word of God on the fog that's hovering over us in this area, and affirm two key truths about biblical love.

1. Love is giving, not getting.

See v 25, "Christ loved the Church, and GAVE Himself for it." "For God so loved the world that He GAVE His only Son (Jn 3:16)." "I am crucified with Christ, yet I love; yet not I, but Christ lives in me...Who loved me and GAVE Himself for me (Gal 2:20)."

Biblical love is giving, not getting. The Greek word is "agape" which is the commitment to do what's good for the other person. That's what Christ did for us. He gave. That's what He calls men to do for their wives. Frankly, real masculinity focuses on giving, not getting.

2. Love is serving, not self-seeking.

We see this in vv 26-27. Christ served His bride. He gave Himself to make His bride beautiful and spotless. True love is not self-seeking, but serving. True love is sacrificial.

May I ask a candid question? Husbands, would you love your wife if she never loved you back? Hosea did with Gomer. God did with Israel. Don't miss this. Husbands, you are to love your wife no matter how she responds. I am always responsible to be a lover, to love my wife as Christ loved His Church.

Someone may object, "That example is too lofty! I could never love my wife the way Christ loved! I need another example." Ok, here it is...

B . Love her as you love your own body (28-29).

In v 28, we find the second comparison highlighted by the word "as"--"So ought men to love their wives AS their own bodies." Men, we can grasp that. We know how to love our bodies. If the stomach growls, we feed it. If we feel sluggish, we work out. If the joints ache, we rest. We know how to meet the needs of our own bodies--it comes naturally. So God says, "Learn to meet the needs of your wife with the same drive, the same devotion, the same dedication."

Let's be practical. If I'm to love my wife as I do my own body, I must take 2 steps.

1. I must notice her needs.

V 29 says, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it." Men, what is more complete--your golf set or her sewing kit, your library or hers, your tool set or her craft set? Do you pay attention to your wife's needs with the same tenacity you give to your own? The second step is this.

2. I must care for her needs.

It's one thing to notice her needs. It's another thing to do something about them.

When Sherry and I became engaged, we were in our fourth year of dating and I was in my final year of college. I didn't have a lot of extra money. I did have two Holstein calves. We joke to this day that I sold one of the calves to pay for Sherry's engagement ring, and the other to pay for our honeymoon. Before couples marry, making sacrifices isn't a grind. When you love someone, it's a delight to meet their needs.

Unfortunately, as the married years pass, we tend to stop noticing and caring for our partner's needs. So stop! Remember that giving is what being a lover is all about!

To the husband, God says, "Be a Learner. And be a Leader." Put those two together, and we come up with the third expectation.

III. Be a Leader.

This responsibility is not so much overt in the text as it is implicit. God calls men to be leaders in their homes. What does that mean? What is a leader?

A. What leadership is not...

Leadership is not being a dictator. There's a world of difference between a selfish leader and a servant leader. God calls husbands to serve their wives and children. There is a sense, according to 5:21, that husbands and wives relate in mutual submission. The parable of the Laborers in Mt 20 endorses the servant leader. By the way, a true leader doesn't serve to GET something in return, but serves to please God. When a servant-leader Dad enters the house, and the kids are fighting, he doesn't yell and blow up and demand his wife do something about the problem. No, he gets involved in the teachable moment. Leadership is not being a demanding dictator.

Secondly, leadership is not making all the decisions. True, God ultimately holds the husband responsible for what happens in the home. 1 Cor 11:3 makes it clear that he is the head of the home. But a husband needs his wife's insight and gifts. A wise servant-leader will delegate and utilize his wife's God-given strengths.

B. What leadership is...

Leadership is serving. Isn't that what Jesus modeled? A leader focuses on the needs of others in the home--his wife (5:23), and his children (6:4). 1 Tim 5:8 makes it black and white, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."

So how do husbands lead in their homes? Allow me to suggest two practical ways. One, be spiritual pace-setters. Have spiritual goals for your family. Chances are, men, you have occupational goals, but do you have spiritual goals for your family? Who is the spiritual pacesetter in your home? Be a leader by being the spiritual pace-setter.

Two, be problem-solvers. Ephesians 4:29 says the sun should not set on our anger. Men, we are ultimately responsible to see to it that bitterness doesn't fester in our homes. We can start by being good models. Men, are you a joy to live with? When you do blow it, do you make things right by asking for forgiveness (or do act as though you are above that)? And what do you do when you see your wife and children harboring sinful attitudes towards you or others? Do you help them resolve the problem or take the attitude, "It's none of my business."? Be a humble problem-solver in your home.

Perhaps you are thinking, "I could never be THAT kind of husband." The truth is, God's standards for husbands (and wives) are high. Quite frankly, there is only one way that we can please God as husbands. We need grace. We need His help. How do we obtain that help? We must accept the help He offers through Jesus Christ.

You see, every person here is born into this world as a sinner, separated from God, unable to keep the requirements of a Holy God. But Jesus Christ came into the world to reconcile us to God. He took the penalty for our sin, and offers to us His righteousness. If we will repent of our sin, and receive Him as our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ will come into our lives. He will enable us to be the kind of people God requires us to be.

So don't view what we've learned today as techniques you must master on your own. You can't. You need Christ. Is Jesus Christ your Savior and Lord?

If he is, resolve to please Him. Men, resolve to be a Learner, a Lover, and Leader.

Homework: "Scorecard for Husbands" by Wayne Mack