

In our last study we looked at God's job description for Christian wives and thought about some of the qualities every woman should cultivate if she wants to do the job well. Now we are going to think about the responsibilities God gives to Christian husbands.

The accusation is often made that Christian teaching has led to the oppression and cruel treatment of women that has been evident, time and again, in the history of Europe. Nothing could be further from the truth. Christian men: real men: men who behave the way God always intended them to hold their wives in high esteem and treat them with respect. God's Word is very clear about it and that should not surprise anyone because Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:25–28 that the way a husband treats his wife is meant to reflect the loving relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His bride, the church.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies."

Real Men Love Their Wives

There is really only one directive here to be considered, and that is that husbands must love their wives. Well, that doesn't sound too bad does it? We do have to add, that there is also an implied responsibility: Husbands have to be leaders in their homes but, from a man's point of view, there does not seem to be much wrong with that idea either. It looks as if husbands have got a pretty good deal, doesn't it?

It is a good deal — of course it is, God gives everybody the best deal — but I have to say that it is not as easy as it looks. If you think husbands have landed a soft option you are probably thinking about love and leadership the way the world does: you have not understood what God means

Real Men Are Romantics At Heart

Everybody enjoys a good love story. There is nothing like a bit of romance to stir up some good feelings, and we all like that. It's just that most men are reluctant to admit it. Most men reckon that all that sentimental feely stuff is for women: they think real men should be tough and strong. It is interesting then to read in Ephesians 5 that in a marriage God gives husbands the responsibility of doing the loving.

A bit of romance is good and, let's be clear, romantic love is a biblical idea: just have a read at Song of Solomon. Romantic love is an important part of your marriage and you should work hard to keep it alive — you will be no less a man in God's eyes if you do — but romantic love is not the primary thing in God's mind when He tells husbands to love their wives.

What God has in mind is the kind of love you read about in 1 Corinthians 13. It is not something to feel, it is being patient and kind; it is always seeing the best in your wife and always putting her interests first above your own.

Romantic love is great, but you do not need to be “in love” to have the kind of marriage that God requires. If you love your wife the way He requires romantic love will always grow. In fact, doing the things God commands is the best way to make it grow. That is why two total strangers who are committed to one another and determined to do things God's way could build a great marriage. And that is why there is hope for every marriage no matter how bad things have become.

A Real Man Would Die For His Wife

The love a husband must show toward his wife is to be like the love which brought the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to die for the Church: self sacrificing love: love that causes him to deny himself for her sake: love that considers no price too high to pay in order to do her good; love that could make him happily lay down his life for her, if it should be necessary.

When a husband loves his wife that way he will be concerned to provide for her and build her up: to nourish her: to provide for her physical needs and to make sure she has all the other things that will help her to develop to her maximum potential. He will cherish her, providing for her emotional needs, making her feel loved and secure. His love will be seen in his efforts to help his bride to be the best person she can be. Just as Jesus cleansed and sanctified the church, he will work to equip his wife to be a godly woman and to prepare her for heaven.

Real Men Are Leaders

A loving husband will be a leader in his home. That is his responsibility for God has made him the head of his home just as He has made the Lord Jesus Christ head of the Church. When he takes up his responsibility to lead, a loving husband will want to be the kind of leader that Jesus is for the Church. Every time he has to do a leader type thing he will ask himself the question, “What would Jesus do?” and he will do it with gentleness and compassion.

Whenever a Christian husband gives a lead to his wife his first concern will be for her highest good. Motivated by self-sacrificing love, he will not be concerned about what he wants or what will be best for him: his bride will be number one in his thoughts.

That kind of leadership is something you do not see much of these days. The world equates leadership with power, but the Bible teaches us that a leader is a servant. Good leaders have authority, but they never use it to further their own ends; they use it to lead those under their command in the direction that is best for them.

Real Men Live With Their Wives

In 1 Peter 3:7 we are given a little more insight into what loving leadership is:

"You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honour as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

Christian husbands must live with their wives. That does not just mean that they reside under the same roof, though no doubt that is a good start. It would probably be nearer to the meaning to say that a husband is to make his home with his wife.

It has been God's directive since the beginning that "...a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall become one flesh"¹ When a couple are married a new family unit is formed and a relationship begins which is closer than, and assumes priority over, all their other relationships. Under ordinary circumstances, it is probably best that each family should have its own separate dwelling place, but in any case husbands, whilst not abandoning respect for their parents, must give prime consideration to the needs of their wives.

If, in setting up home, a husband is to "cleave to his wife" in a relationship so close that the two are to be considered "one flesh" then not only will his consideration of his wife take priority over the demands of his parents, it will also assume priority over all other considerations. Work, leisure activities and friends will take second place to the discharge of his duties at home. He will have no desire to find pleasure apart from the company of his wife. He will not be content to spend long periods away from home other than in the most exceptional circumstances. In making decisions, even with regard to such weighty matters as employment and career, his first thought will be to the care and to the best interest of his spouse. John Brown, in his commentary on 1 Peter, puts it like this:

"There are some husbands who never consult their wives, and even leave them to learn from a third person matters in which they are deeply concerned. This is not as it should be. He who enters into the spirit of the Apostle's advice, will, amid the occupations of the day, please himself with the thought of enjoying her company in the evening, as the best refreshment after his toils. Her presence will make his own mansion, however humble, far more agreeable to him than any other which he may occasionally visit. The anxieties and cares attendant upon her maternal and domestic character he will endeavour to soothe and relieve. When she is happy he will be happy: when she is afflicted he will be afflicted. He will rejoice with her when she rejoices, and weep with her when she weeps. His heart will safely trust in her, and, by a constant interchange of kind offices, he will increase both in her and in himself that entire confidential esteem and love, which makes all relative duties easy and pleasant. This is for the husband to dwell with the wife."

Real Men Use Their Heads

God does not just command you to make your home with your wife, He expects you to do it "in an understanding way" or, "with knowledge"? In other words, when husbands govern their homes they must do so as intelligent beings, giving thought to what they are doing; not merely being guided by their own whims and desires. They must use tact and discretion and all the wisdom at their disposal in making every decision for which they are responsible. They must know and understand their wives and they must also be able to draw upon a sound knowledge of God's Word.

So then, a wise husband will try to form a sound assessment of his wife's temperament and talents. He will know her moods, her likes, her dislikes, her strengths and her weaknesses. He will know her needs and her desires and he will act accordingly. He will seek to guard and correct her weaknesses, not with harshness but in such a way as to encourage and strengthen her. He will help her to develop her strengths and talents. He will be concerned with her problems and be aware of the pressures she bears. He will know how much she can carry upon her shoulders and he will see that she has rest and relief when she needs it. He will see to her spiritual nourishment and growth. She is his wife and he, as head of the home, bears responsibility for her welfare in every department of her life.

But a wise husband will also govern his home according his knowledge of God's Word, and for that reason husbands have a special responsibility to study the Word of God so that they can be familiar with its teaching on all matters of daily life.

All this, and much more, is included when Peter calls on husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way. He takes the idea further when he says that husbands are to live with their wives "...as with a weaker vessel."

¹ Genesis 2:24

Real Men Stand Up For Their Wives

Husbands are to regard their wives as having a weaker frame than their own. Peter does not tell us in what way they are more weak. Indeed whether they are weaker or not does not matter, the point is that husbands are to act toward their wives as if they are weaker and treat them accordingly, with special tenderness and affection.

Husbands are the guardians and protectors of their wives. A wife may have mental endowments equal to or greater than those of her husband; she may have moral qualities superior to his, and he should respect and encourage these gifts, but he is still to be her defender and her head and he must not shirk his obligations.

There are many homes where it is the wife who carries the burden of leadership. She bears the load of administering the affairs of the home and rearing the children. It is she who puts thought into planning and decision-making whilst her husband is content to sit back and let her, interested only in his own affairs. The roles become reversed. The wife becomes the head of the home, the husband being content to go along with it. She does not want it to be that way, but someone has to do it, God's order is abandoned and, sooner or later, you can be sure problems will arise. The teaching of Scripture is plain; every husband is to be the head of his home: he is to establish and maintain it with understanding, regarding his wife as the weaker vessel. He must be a real man and not shrink from that task.

Real Men Respect Their Wives

Although a man is to regard his wife as the weaker vessel, he must still grant her honour because, Peter says, she is a fellow heir of the grace of life. He must value her opinion and allow her to develop her talents. He must regard her intelligence and pay heed to her spiritual insight. He must remember that she has been appointed by God to be his helper because he needs her. Without the qualities she brings to their relationship he would not be complete.

God's Word silences those who accuse Christianity of oppression and degradation of women. Christian men: real men: men as God intended them to be set their wives upon a pedestal and give them a dignity and position which the feminist movement could never achieve for them. Feminism degrades women by trying to make them into something they were never meant to be: it tries to make them the same as men. Christian men: real men serve their wives. They love them. They respect them. They honour them. They protect them. They carefully guide them in the right way. They treasure them as being the helpers they need.

Are you a real man?

This Is Important

Peter concludes his teaching about marriage with a warning: "that your prayers may not be hindered." It is true: when a husband evades his duties and responsibilities toward his wife: when he does not treat her as he should his prayers will be hindered and his spiritual progress will be arrested.

We live in a time when there is little blessing in our churches. Souls are not being saved in the numbers we would like to see. Christians are spiritually weak and immature. The Word of God is not clearly taught and understood. Error and false doctrine abound. Strong, wise leadership is notable by its absence. I wonder why? Could it be anything to do with the fact that our churches are full of men who neglect their wives?

The war is on. The enemy is advancing. God's army needs men: real men.

Some Things For You To Do

Read the following passages with your family over the next week. Talk about what you read together, make sure you have all understood it and think about what it might mean for your family.

- 1 Corinthians 13 How could love like this be made more evident in your home?
- Proverbs 31:10–31 This passage describes an excellent wife, but what can you learn from it about the way her husband and children treat her?
- 1 Peter 3:1–7 The duties imposed on husbands and wives are not conditional: wives must obey their husbands even if they are not loved by them and husbands are to love their wives even if they do not submit to their authority. What should a husband do if his wife will not submit to his authority?
- 1 Timothy 3:1–13 Many men aspire to be leaders in the church, and that is good, but why do you think it is necessary for a man to prove himself as a leader in his own home before he can be appointed to lead in the church?
- Titus 2:2 & 6–8 Here is a list of qualities that are to be developed by every Christian man. How can we teach them to our sons?



What qualities should a young woman look for in a man when she is deciding who to marry?



What qualities should a young man look for in a woman when he is deciding who to marry?

Just For Husbands



Make a list of as many things as you can think of that you could do in order to be a better husband. Don't show the list to anyone else but keep it and prayerfully, work through it and do as many of those things as you can. This time next year look back at your list and see how much you have changed.